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LOVE AND OTHER STORIES

FROM DE MAUPASSANT

TRANSLATED BY MICHAEL MONAHAN

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To

MME. MURIEL CIOLKOWSKA

WHO WRITING IN FRANCE HAS SERVED AND ILLUSTRATED TWO LITERATURES.

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INTRODUCTION

To mention the short story is to name de Maupassant: —in France where this fascinating form of literary art originated and where it has long been cultivated with success, his primacy is undisputed.

French critics distinguish the Maupassant *conte* of fifteen hundred words or so from the *nouvelle*, or more extended short story. The former is regarded as Maupassant's special achievement—in the words of Marcel Prévost, his "most personal, most definitive and most excellent work." Indeed, M. Prévost declares that the Maupassant *conte*—brief, realistic, picturesque—is without literary ancestors in France; so that in form and compass no less than in the inner stigmata of the work, it may be regarded as originating with the "disciple" of Flaubert. *

The stories brought together in this volume are but a small portion of de Maupassant's work, yet it is hoped that they will give the general reader a fairer notion of his art than at present obtains among that very large public to whom French is a sealed book, and who have had access to him only in crude and disfiguring translations.

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* According to the eminent critic cited, Maupassant as a *conteur* still stands without a rival in the favor of the French reading public; there is no second to him, and death has but given him a larger and more widely diffused audience.

As an artist Guy de Maupassant has the highest claims to our respect, and we must combat the still too prevalent English depreciation of him as a mere literary sensualist or writer of "suggestive" stories—a kind of false fame which has shut him out from the knowledge of many lovers of literature. Whatever we may think of his choice of subjects or his manner of treating them, and however much we may deprecate the Gallic license in this province, we shall not be able to dispute his literary pre-eminence. For example, we are always comparing the adjective "great," as between Mr. Kipling and some one else, usually to someone else's disparagement. Well, Maupassant was nearly always a finer artist than Kipling, though his view of life was neither so inclusive nor so wholesome as the Englishman's. It must in truth be admitted that, literary ethics apart, the body of Maupassant's work is marked by a ruthless freedom of treatment and an ignoring of conventional reserves and restrictions which have unduly prejudiced it with English readers. This, however, does not impair its value as a human document, or as a piece of consummate artistry. And, in the last analysis, the question of art is allowed to be superior to the questions raised by moral squeamishness.

Few English writers have satisfied the demands of the artistic conscience as rigorously as did Maupassant. It may be worth while to recall briefly the guiding rules of his fine art for the benefit of those who regard good writing as an easeful occupation. In the preface to *Pierre et Jean*, written at the height of his powers, he says: "After so many masters of nature so varied, of genius so manifold, what remains to do, which has not been done, what

remains to say, which has not been said? Who can boast, among us, of having written a page, a phrase, which is not already, almost the same, to be found elsewhere?" Now the man who seeks only to amuse his public, continues Maupassant, by means already known and familiar, writes with confidence, his work being intended for the ignorant and idle crowd. But—and here is a truth, oh ye professors of literature!—those upon whom weigh heavily all the past cycles of literature, those whom nothing satisfies, whom everything disgusts, because they still dream of the unattainable, to whom everything seems already deflowered, whose work gives them always the impression of a labor useless and common—*they* arrive at length to judge the literary art as a thing unseizable and mysterious, which even the greatest masters have scarcely unveiled. What remains then, he asks, for us who are simply conscientious and persevering workers? Why, we can maintain our struggle against invincible discouragement only by continuous effort—*par la continuite de l'effort.*

Let the young English aspirant read the story of Maupassant's seven years' apprenticeship to Flaubert—it will be worth more to him than the learned lucubrations of Dr. Dryasdust or even his sedulous imitation of Bennett and Galsworthy. "I know not," said the master to his disciple, at their first meeting, "whether you have talent. [illegible] you have shown me proves a certain intelligence. [illegible] do not forget, young man, that genius, according to [illegible]on, is only a long patience." From the author of [illegible]*ame Bovary,* Maupassant derived the chief canon of

his artistic faith and practice, which may profitably be set down here:

"Whatever may be the thing one wishes to say, there is only one phrase to express it, only one verb to animate it, and only one adjective to qualify it. One must seek until one finds *this phrase, this verb and this adjective;* and one must never be content with less, never have recourse to even happy frauds (*supercheries*) or buffooneries of language, in order to avoid the difficulty."

The literal observance of this rule served the disciple as well as it had served the master—(there are critics who regard Maupassant, in no small portion of his work as the greater artist). It gave him an almost unique distinction in an epoch and a nation peculiarly fertile in great writers. He was, and is, the unchallenged master of the *conte* or short story. In English we have no one to compare with him, except Edgar Allan Poe and Rudyard Kipling, both of whom he outclasses by virtue of pure artistry. From time to time we hear of some new writer dubbed as the English Maupassant, the Russian Maupassant, even the American Maupassant (!), etc. in accordance with a foolish custom of lazy or incompetent critics. *

It is to be observed that the label never sticks: the artist who (as Henry James said) found short cuts in the night, has nothing to fear from those who would borrow his name. He has had many imitators in all [illegible]

* Schnitzler is often dubbed the German or Aust[illegible] passant, with very doubtful appositeness. Our own [illegible] was called the American Maupassant—to his ke[illegible] ment, it would seem, as he could not read the Fr[illegible] works in the original.

and the strongest men in fiction since his day have been glad to sit at the feet of Flaubert's pupil; but his peculiar achievement remains at its best unique and unapproach-ble. Maupassant's trick of telling a story in which the dynamic effect is infallibility calculated, like a marksman who can always be counted on to ring the bull'seye—the stern preparedness with which he sets about his work, brushing away unessentials with that powerful gesture of his—the literal transcription of life, as it seems, which is yet the selective miracle of art—that style so sternly simple, so incomparably terse, yet vibrant with personality like a stretched bow in the wind—that faculty, in which he is still unrivaled, of adequately presenting a passion or a tragedy within a dozen pages—that dolorous though morbid sympathy with the miseries of life, which remains like an unhealed wound with the reader when Hugo's sentimentalism is forgotten—that for the most part unjoyous mirth of the humorist who never laughs—these are the stigmata of the Frenchman's talent which one fails to recognize appreciably in the work of his rivals and successors. Not one of them has touched upon the heart of his secret—that remains, in its full potency, a thing which will not be seen again. Further, it must be allowed that the Frenchman owes his superiority not merely to the perfection of the phrase, but to the variety of his inventions, and his abnormal power of making the reader partake of his impressions. Poe studiously cultivated the horrible, but in tales of this order he achieved an unquestioned artistic success only in the *Cask of Amontillado*. I should like to see what Maupassant would have done with this story, had it come fresh to his hand. Yet

he has a score of such, if not so dramatic in conception as Poe's masterpiece, certainly less peccable in other artistic respects. *L'Apparition* is the most convincing ghost story ever written; Corsican revenge has never been depicted so briefly and powerfully as in his tale of the old woman's vendetta; *Pierre et Jean* is a triumph of art applied to the psychology of moral guilt. *La Petite Roque* is as terribly distinctive a success—we can easily imagine how Poe's twiddling detective instinct would have spoiled these stories for him; *Allouma* is the last word of a sensualism that is as flagrantly frank as it is splendidly poetical; *L'Heritage,* in its politely suppressed irony and demure analysis of motive, rivals Balzac's veritistic etching of Parisian manners.

But what shall I say of *Bel-Ami*, the perfect pink of cynical scoundrelism, with the profoundly immoral, yet strictly true, lesson of the wicked hero's success? Oh, Sandford and Merton! what a contrast is here to the smug hypocrisy of the British Philistia! The man who wrote this book is surely damned—but if you do not admire it, O percipient reader, you will hardly escape artistic reprobation. Talk of the satire of *Vanity Fair*—a book without a man in it! Look, I pray you, at the victorious *Monsieur Georges Duroy*—pardon! I should say, *Du Roy*—see how this plenary profligate makes his smiling way; conquering and deserting women at every turn; putting always money in his purse; guilty of everything except a blush of shame or a pang of remorse. What "green probationers in mischief" he makes your stock literary villains appear! The fellow is irresistible, too; has such an air that the more women he conquers

the more pursue him, ladies of approved and matronly virtue as well as *flaneuses* of the *pavé*. How grandly he goes on from success to success, until the church itself puts the capstone on his triumphal career, and *le beau monde* of Paris acclaims his crowning rascality!

If the true victory of the artist be to have made himself unforgettable in his work, then we may well pause at the name of de Maupassant. The copy of life which he has given us is one of unique interest,—terrible, fascinating, yet repellent. No writer moves us to keener curiosity regarding his mental processes or the formative influences which went to the making of his style and talent. For his rare and sinister distinction he paid, as we know, a fearful price—the man sacrificed himself to the artist. This would have appeared to Maupassant a perfectly logical act, involving neither heroism nor madness, since he held to no commandments save those of Art.

The artistic value of that poignant sacrifice, the literary value of that deeply etched transcript of life, remains and will remain. Tolstoy characterizes Maupassant as the most powerful of modern French writers of fiction. There is, by the way, between these two masters, otherwise so strongly contrasted, no slight kinship in point of artistic methods. Maupassant is perhaps the only Frenchman who could conceivably have written *Ivan Ilyitch*, that most pitiless yet authentic study of disease and death. Perhaps, had Maupassant lived to his full maturity—we must not forget that he died a young man—he would have come, like Tolstoy, to see life with a less morbid

and troubled vision. He perished to the strains of that *Kreutzer Sonata* which the Russian long survived, and which it is now difficult to associate with his name. . . .

Yet it may not be denied that there was a certain fitness in the fate of Maupassant. No writer has ever made women so absorbingly his study—they were his passion in art as in life. Perhaps no writer has unveiled with so firm a hand the darker side of their psychology. Again, in art as in life, he stayed not long with any mistress; but most of them live with such an intensity of realization as is given to few of the marionettes of fiction. Recall *Yvette, Une Fille d'une Ferme,* and *Boule de Suif* as contrasted types. He who has passed through the stern gallery which bears the name of Maupassant, can no more forget the legends thereof than the heart-searching experiences of his own life.

I have cited from memory only a few of the more famous *contes*—there are more than twenty volumes of them, not including the novels and other literary efforts. An immense quantity of the most strenuously artistic production; nothing bad or inept, at least in the English degree, shall you find in all these books. Maupassant burned the essays made during his long apprenticeship to Flaubert. The French people have a rigorous artistic sense and do not take kindly to the English practice of collecting the first amateurish effusions of their authors: they wait until the bird has learned to sing.

If the fruits of Maupassant's devotion to his beloved art were less real and apparent, one might take more seriously the legend that imputes to him an exclusive cult of lubricity. The sins of the artist are always exagger-

ated. In the case of Maupassant, exaggeration was the easier that the artist belonged to a race which is remarkable neither for continence nor discretion. It is true he confessed that "women were his only vice"; but, mindful of his thirty volumes, many of them masterpieces, and his premature death, we can allow him a larger measure of charity than he claims. This much is certain—Maupassant was *not* his own most celebrated hero, as Byron liked to have people think *he* was his own Don Juan. Perhaps the creator of *Georges Duroy* would have relished the rôle himself—if there were not books to write and, especially, if Flaubert had not laid on him so inflexible a rule of art! I suspect that the most tragic phase of Maupassant's life-tragedy consists in the fearful penalty he paid for an indulgence which is not so unusual as the world tries to make itself believe.

The indulgence of the critical is asked for the present attempt to render into equivalent English an author whose transparent clarity of style often co-exists with the utmost subtlety of thought—a writer whom Sully-Proudhomme calls "the representative of French literary genius in all its virile passion and elegance." I may claim but one merit for the following translations, that of almost literal fidelity—which it must be owned is a defect, in the view of some excellent judges. I am, however, mainly concerned to impart to my readers, so far as I may, the effect that Maupassant's work has upon myself; and if I have produced a truly impressionistic copy of the same, I shall be more than content, whatever the technical demerits of the performance.

Also, it may or may not concern the reader to know that the translations contained in this book were originally made as a "labour of love" and in a spirit of protest against some very bad versions that had appeared in this country, producing a perfectly libellous impression of Maupassant and his art. Further, they were thought out on a strict selective principle, * as exhibiting by carefully chosen examples the best work of this fecund artist in his unchallenged realm of the *conte* or short story. I have purposely drawn upon the more psychological side of Maupassant's art—the soul-stories, as I may call them —as distinguished from the tales of grosser vein in which, toward the end of his career, he too much indulged. Herein he will be found in his highest moods of passion and power, in some of his most fortunate conceptions; and the American reader in especial will be surprised at the delicacy of thought, the depth of spiritual beauty, and the purity of phrase and sentiment marking not a few of these tales of the Norman master.

It may be impertinent in me to avow that the making of this translation—an occasional task spread over a period of ten years—has doubled my own pleasure and satisfaction in the work of Maupassant. True it is that one can only get to know a foreign author by translating him. Without seeking to compliment my own humble efforts as interpreter—which indeed were useless, since all praise justly recurs to the original—I may confide to the indulgent reader, that the English version seemed to grow under my hand with the overpowering charm and seduction of a

* I have passed by certain stories which, whatever their merit, have become staled by frequent use—and abuse—in this country.

new work. It was again the incomparable artist, the master of psychology who delights even while he terrifies, but brought nearer to me through the medium of my mother tongue.

For another reason, lovers of Maupassant will, it is hoped, give kindly welcome to this collection of his masterpieces:—it should go far to correct the vulgar English and American notion of him as a mere pornographer who seasoned his indecent stories with a dash of style. It is true Maupassant often deals with subjects inhibited by our censorship (though perhaps not by our curiosity); but he deals with them always as an artist, viewing them as essential to his transcript of life. A translation like the present one that aims to give a faithful reflex of his literary style, and to reveal the scope of his many-sided observation of life, must also justify the artistic motive which dominates his imperishable work.

MICHAEL MONAHAN.

LOVE AND OTHER STORIES

LOVE

I HAVE just read, in a newspaper item, a drama of passion. He killed her, then he killed himself; therefore he loved her. What matter these persons, *He* and *She?*—their love alone matters to me; and it interests me, not because it touches me, or because it astonishes me, or because it makes me think, but because it recalls a memory of my youth, a strange memory of a hunting adventure in which Love appeared to me like a cross in the heaven to the first Christians.

I was born with all the instincts and senses of primitive man, tempered by the reasonings and emotions of a civilized being. I love hunting passionately; and the bleeding bird, the blood on its plumes, the blood on my hands, make my heart almost faint with a sort of rapture.

Toward the end of autumn that year the cold came suddenly, and I was invited by one of my cousins, Karl de Rauville, to hunt wild ducks with him in the marshes at daybreak.

My cousin was a stalwart man of forty years, red-haired and heavily bearded, a country gentleman, amiable half-brute, of a gay character, gifted with that cheerful humor which renders mediocrity agreeable. He lived in a kind of farm-château situated in a large valley through which a river flowed. Woods covered the hills

to the right and to the left—old seigneurial woods where stood some magnificent trees, and where one found the rarest feathered game in all that part of France. One killed eagles there sometimes; and birds of passage—those that scarcely ever visit our densely populated country—stop almost infallibly in those venerable branches, as if they knew or recognized a little forest corner of old times, which had remained there to serve as shelter for them in their brief nocturnal halt.

In the valley there were large meadows watered by trenches and separated by hedges; farther on, the river which up to that point had been made navigable, expanded into a vast marsh. This marsh was the best shooting ground I ever saw; it was my cousin's chief care, and he kept it like a park. Amid the rushes that covered it with their noisy rustling life, narrow passages had been made, through which flat-bottomed boats were poled along silently over the stagnant waters, brushing up against the reeds, causing the swift fish to take refuge among the weeds, and scaring the wild fowl, whose black, pointed heads would disappear suddenly as they dove.

I love the water with a great passion: the sea, although too vast, too disturbing, impossible to possess; the rivers, so beautiful, but which pass on, which flow away, which depart; and, above all, the marshes, wherein palpitates all the unknown life of aquatic things. The marsh is an entire world by itself on the earth, a different world, which has its own life, its sedentary inhabitants, its passing voyagers, its voices and, above all, its mystery. Nothing is more troubling, more fear-inspiring sometimes,

than a morass. Why hovers this fear over the low plains covered with water? Is it the vague rumor of reeds, the strange jack-o'-lanterns, the profound silence which envelops the marsh on calm nights, or perhaps the strange mists which hang over the rushes like clinging death-robes; or, it may be, the almost imperceptible chopping of the water, so light, so soft, and yet more terrible sometimes than the cannon of men or the artillery of heaven,—that causes the morass to resemble some dream-country, some fearful region hiding a secret impenetrable and dangerous?

No: another thing disengages itself, another mystery more profound and grave, floats in the thick fog, the very mystery of creation, perhaps! For was it not in the stagnant, muddy water, in the heavy humidity of saturated lands, under the heat of the sun, that the first germ of life moved, vibrated, and opened itself to the light? . . .

Toward evening I arrived at my cousin's house. It was freezing hard enough to split the stones.

During the dinner, in the large room where the cupboards, the walls, the ceiling were covered with impaled birds, with extended wings, or perched upon branches fastened by nails; sparrow-hawks, herons, owls, tercelets, buzzards, falcons, vultures,—my cousin wearing a seal-skin jacket, himself resembling some strange animal of the frigid zone, explained to me the arrangements which he had made for this very night.

We were to start at half-past three o'clock in the morn-

ing, so as to arrive betimes at the point chosen for our watch. In this place a hut had been constructed of blocks of ice, in order to shelter us a little against the terrible wind which precedes the day,—that wind loaded with frost which tears the flesh like a saw, cuts it like the blade of a knife, stabs it like a poisoned needle, twists it like pincers, and burns it like fire.

My cousin rubbed his hands. "I have never seen such a frost," he said, "we shall have twelve degrees below zero at six o'clock this evening."

After supper I threw myself on my bed and fell asleep in the light of a great fire flaming in the chimney-place.

Three o'clock was striking when they called me. I put on a sheepskin and I found Karl wrapped in bear furs. After swallowing two cups of burning hot coffee, followed by two glasses of fine champagne, we set out, accompanied by a guard and our dogs, Plongeon and Pierrot.

From the first steps outside, I felt myself frozen to the marrow. It was one of those nights when the earth seems dead with cold. The frozen air resists one; no breath agitates it; it is fixed, motionless, it bites, pierces dries up and kills the trees, the plants, the insects, the little birds that fall from the branches onto the hard earth, and become hard also like the soil under the clutch of the frost.

The moon in its last quarter, inclined side-wise and very pale, seemed dying in the midst of space, and so feeble that it was unable to go away, but remained up there, fixed also, paralyzed by the rigor of the sky. It cast a sad, dry light upon the world—that dying, ghastly

light which it gives each month at the end of its resurrection.

Karl and I were trudging side by side, with shoulders dropped, hands in pocket and gun under arm. Our boots wrapped in woollen leggings to prevent slipping on the ice, made no noise; and I watched the white smoke arising from the breath of our dogs.

Presently we reached the borders of the morass, and we entered one of those alleys of dry reeds which penetrated this low forest. Brushing aside the long, ribbon-like leaves, we left behind us a light noise, and I felt myself seized, as I had never been before by the strange and powerful emotion which the morass always produces in one. This marsh was dead, dead with the cold—since we were marching upon it—in the midst of its population of withered rushes.

Suddenly, at the turn of the alley, I saw the ice hut which had been built to shelter us. I went inside, and as we had still nearly an hour to await the awakening of the wild birds, I wrapped myself in a blanket in a desperate effort to keep warm. Then, lying on my back, I set myself to watching the deformed moon, which had four horns through the vaguely transparent walls of this polar house.

But the cold of the frozen morasses, the cold of these walls, the cold from the sky, pierced me so terribly that I began to cough.

My cousin Karl was disturbed. "Whether we kill anything or not to-day," he said, "I don't want you to catch cold; we will have a fire here." And he ordered the guard to cut some dry reeds.

A heap of these was made in the middle of the hut, which had a hole at the top to let the smoke out; and when the red flame mounted the height of the crystal walls, they began to melt softly, as if these stones of ice were sweating. Karl who had remained outside, cried to me, "Come and see this!" I stepped out and stood transfixed with wonder. Our cabin, shaped like a cone, seemed a monstrous diamond with a heart of fire, which had suddenly arisen from the frozen water of the marsh. And within we saw two fantastic forms—those of our dogs, warming themselves.

But a strange cry, a loud cry, a wandering cry, passed over our heads. The light of our fire was awakening the wild birds.

Nothing moves me like this first clamor of life which one does not see, and which runs in the sombre air, so fast, so far, before the first light of the winter day appears at the horizon. I fancy, at this frozen hour of dawn, that this fugitive cry carried by the wings of a bird, may be a sigh from the soul of the world!

Karl said, "Put out the fire. It is the dawn."

Indeed the sky was turning gray and bands of ducks in rapid flight passed across the firmament.

A light suddenly blazed in the darkness; Karl had fired, and the dogs leaped forward.

Then from minute to minute,—now he and now I,—we aimed quickly as soon as the shadow of the birds appeared above the reeds. Pierrot and Plongeon, breathless and joyous, brought us the bleeding birds, whose eyes sometimes regarded us in dying.

The day had fully arisen, the sky was clear and blue; the sun was rising at the bottom of the valley, and we were thinking of returning home when two birds, with neck straight and wings stretched in flight, passed suddenly over our heads. I fired. One of them fell almost at my feet. It was a teal with a silver-white belly. Then, in the space above me, a voice, the voice of a bird, cried. It was a short plaint, repeated, heart-rending; and the little surviving bird began to turn in the blue heaven above us, while watching his dead mate which I held in my hands.

Karl on one knee, with eye blazing and gun leveled, sighted for the bird; waiting until it should be near enough.

"You have killed the female," he said, "the male will not go away."

Certainly he was not going away; he was turning always and moaning about us. Never has a lament of suffering torn my heart like the desolate cry, the lamentable reproach of that poor bird lost in space.

Sometimes he flew away under the menace of the gun which followed his flight; he seemed ready to continue his route all alone across the sky. But unable to decide, he returned presently to seek his mate.

"Leave it on the ground," said Karl, "he will come near soon."

He approached, indeed, careless of danger, wild with his love, the love of an animal for the other animal that I had killed.

Karl fired: it was as if some one had cut the cord which

held the bird suspended. I saw something black descending: I heard something fall in the reeds. And Pierrot brought him to me.

I put them both, cold already, in the same gamebag . . . and I started that very day for Paris.

OUR LETTERS

Eight hours on the railroad determine sleep for some and insomnia for others. As for myself, every journey prevents me from sleeping, the night following.

I arrived toward nine o'clock at the house of my friends the Muret d'Artus family, purposing to spend three weeks at their country place called Abelle. It is a pretty house, built toward the end of the Eighteenth Century by one of their great-grandfathers and kept ever since in the family. It has, therefore, that intimate character of houses which have always been occupied, inhabited, verified as it were, by the same people. Nothing changes there; nothing evaporates from the soul of the abode, never unfurnished, whose tapestries have never been unfastened, and which have become worn, faded and discolored on the same walls. Of the ancient furniture nothing goes away or is discarded; only it is disturbed from time to time to make room for a new piece, which enters there like a new-born child in the midst of brothers and sisters.

The house is on a hill in the midst of a park that slopes down to the river, crossed here by a stone bridge. Beyond the water, meadows extend where are to be seen fat, slow-footed cows nourished with moist grass, whose humid eyes seem full of dews and mists and the freshness

of pastures. I love this place as one loves what one passionately desires to possess. I return here every year in the autumn with an infinite pleasure. I leave it with regret.

After I had dined in this friendly family, so calm and peaceful, where I was received as a relative, I asked of my comrade, Paul Muret:

"What room have you given me this year?"

"Aunt Rose's."

An hour later Madame Muret d'Artus, followed by her three children,—two tall misses and a scapegrace of a boy,—installed me in this chamber of Aunt Rose's, where I had not yet slept.

When I was left alone I examined the walls, the pieces of furniture, all the physiognomy of the apartment, in order to make my mind at home there. I knew it, but very slightly, having entered it several times and also cast an indifferent glance at a portrait in pastel of Aunt Rose, after whom the room had been named.

She told me nothing at all, this old Aunt Rose, in her curl-papers, almost effaced behind the glass. She had the air of a good woman of the past, a woman of principles and precepts, as strong upon maxims of morality as upon cooking recipes,—in short, one of those old aunts who scare away gayety and who are the morose and wrinkled angels of provincial families.

I had not heard anything about her, besides; I knew nothing of her life or of her death. Did she date from this century or the preceding one? Had she quitted this earth after an existence tame or agitated? Had she

yielded back to Heaven the pure soul of an old maid, the calm soul of a wife, the tender soul of a mother, or a soul disturbed by love? What mattered it to me? Nothing; only this name, "Aunt Rose," seemed to me ridiculous, common, pitiful.

I took up a candle in order to scrutinize her severe visage, hung high in an old gilded frame. Then, finding it insignificant, disagreeable, antipathetic even, I turned to examine the furniture of the room. It dated entirely from the end of Louis XVI's reign, from the Revolution and the Directory.

Nothing, not a chair, not a curtain, had penetrated since that epoch into this chamber, which exhaled the souvenir, the subtle odor,—odor of wood, of textures, of chairs, of tapestries, in certain rooms where hearts have lived and loved and suffered.

Then I went to bed, but I could not sleep. After an hour or two of restlessness, I decided to get up and write some letters.

I opened a little mahogany secretary or cabinet with copper rods, placed between the two windows, hoping to find in it paper and ink. But I found nothing in it save a pen-holder much worn, made of a porcupine quill, and a little bitten at the end. I was going to shut up the desk again when a shining point caught my eye: it was a sort of yellow pin-head making a little projection in the corner of a drawer. I scratched it with my finger and it seemed to move. I seized it between two finger nails and drew on it as hard as I could. It came away very softly—a long gold pin, slipped and hidden in a corner of the old cabinet.

Why was it hidden there? I thought immediately that it must have served to move a spring which concealed a secret drawer; and I sought for this spring. It was a long search. After at least two hours of investigation I discovered another hole almost opposite to the first, but at the end of a groove. I buried my pin in this; a little door leaped in my face, and I saw two packets of letters, —old, yellow letters, tied with a blue ribbon.

I read them. And I copy two of them here:

"You wish me then to return your letters, my dear love. Well, here they are, but your request has caused me great pain. What are you afraid of? That I should lose them? But they are all under lock and key. That somebody might steal them? But I watch over them constantly, for they are my dearest treasure.

"Yes, to return them has caused me extreme pain. I asked myself if you had not at the bottom of your heart some regret. Not, indeed, regret for having loved me, for I know that you love me always, but regret for having expressed on blank paper this living love in hours when your heart confided itself, not to me, but to the pen which you held in your hand. When we love there rises in us a need of confession, a tender need of speaking or writing; and we speak and we write. The spoken words fly away, the sweet words made of music, of air and of tenderness, warm, light, evaporated as soon as said, which remain in the memory alone, but which we cannot see or touch or kiss, like the words written by your hand. Your letters? Oh, I return them to you. But what a grief it is!

"Certainly you must have had, on reflection, some delicate self-reproach for words ineffaceable. You have regretted in your sensitive, fearful soul upon which the lightest shadow seizes, having so written to a man whom you loved. You have recalled some phrases which disturbed your memory, and you have said to yourself, 'I shall make ashes of those words!'

"Well, be content—be at peace. Here are your letters. I love you."

"My Dear One:

"No, you have not understood, you have not divined my intent. I do not regret, I shall never regret having told you my love. I shall write to you always, but you shall return me all my letters as soon as received and read.

"I shall shock you very much, my love, if I tell you the reason of this demand. It is not poetical, as you were thinking, but practical. I am afraid—not of you, assuredly, but of chance. I am guilty. I do not wish that my fault may reach others than myself.

"Understand me well. We may die, you or I. You may die by a fall from your horse, for you ride every day; you may die from an assault, from a duel, from heart-disease, from a carriage accident, in a thousand ways; for if there is only one death, there are more fashions of receiving it than we have days to live. Then, your sister, your brother and your sister-in-law, would not they find my letters?

"Do you believe that they love me? I don't much believe it. And then, even if they adored me, is it possible

that two women and a man knowing a secret—and such a secret—would keep it?

"I seem to be saying a villainous thing in speaking first of your death, and then in suspecting the discretion of your family.

"But we shall all die, one day or another, shall we not? And it is almost certain that one of us will precede the other to the grave. Then surely it is necessary to foresee all dangers, even that.

"As for myself, I shall keep your letters beside mine, in the secret drawer of my little cabinet. I shall show them to you in their silken hiding place, sleeping side by side, full of our love, like lovers in a tomb.

"You are going to say to me: 'But if you should die first, my dear, your husband would find them—our letters!'

"Oh, I am not in the least afraid. First, he does not know the secret of my cabinet; then, he will not seek it. And even should he find it after my death, still I fear nothing.

"Have you ever thought of all the love-letters found in the drawers of the dead? For myself, I have long thought of them, and it is my reflections thereupon which have decided me to reclaim my letters from you.

"Remember that never—mark me well!—*never* does a woman burn, tear or otherwise destroy the letters which tell her that she is loved. All our life is there, all our hope, all our expectation, all our dreams. These little papers which bear our name and caress us with sweet things, are as relics in a chapel-shrine; and we adore chapels, we women, especially those in which we are the

saints. Our titles of love, these are our titles of beauty, our titles of grace and fascination, our intimate woman's pride; these are the treasures of our heart. No, no!—never does a woman destroy these secret and delicious archives of her life.

"But we shall die, like all the world, and then . . . then, these letters, they find them! Who finds them? The husband. Then what does he do? Nothing, he burns them: that's all.

"Oh, I have thought very much about this; very much. Think that every day women die who have been loved; that every day the traces, the proofs of their fault fall into the hands of their husbands; and yet never a scandal breaks out, never a duel takes place.

"Think, my dear, what man is, or rather the heart of man. You avenge yourself for a living woman; you fight with the man who has dishonored you, you kill him, so long as she lives, because . . . yes, because?—I do not know why exactly. But if you find, after her death, some similar proofs of her fault, you burn them, and you say nothing, and you continue friends with the lover of the dead; and you are well satisfied that these letters did not fall into strange hands and in knowing that they are destroyed.

"Oh! don't I know among my friends some men who must have burned such proofs, and who feigned to know nothing, but who would have fought with blind rage and fury had they found them while *she* still lived. But she is dead! Honor is no longer touched. The grave is the limit of wifely misconduct.

"Therefore, I may keep our letters, which in *you*

hands would be a menace to us both. Dare you say that I am not right?

"I love you and I kiss your hair.

"Rose."

I had raised my eyes to the portrait of Aunt Rose, and I scrutinized her severe face, wrinkled, demurely masked; and I thought of all those souls of women whom we do not really know, whom we suppose to be so different from what they really are, whose native, simple cunning and tranquil duplicity we never penetrate. And de Vigny's line came suddenly back to my memory—

"Always this companion whose heart is not sure!"

FOR SALE

To start on foot when the sun rises, and to march in the dew along the fields, beside the calm sea, what exhilaration!

A sort of joyous intoxication seems to enter your whole being, through your eyes with the brightness, through your nostrils with the light air, through your skin with the breaths of wind.

Why do we preserve so clear, so fond, so sharp a memory of certain moments of love with the Earth,—the memory of a sensation delicious and rapid like the caress of a landscape disclosed by the turn of a road, at the entrance of a valley, from the bank of a river, as if one should meet a beautiful and complaisant girl?

I remember one day among others. I was going along beside the Breton ocean toward the cape of Finistère. I was going on, without thinking of anything, at a rapid gait beside the waves. It was in the neighborhood of Quimperlé, in that region the sweetest and loveliest of Brittany. A morning of springtime, one of those mornings which rejuvenate you by twenty years, renew your hopes and restore to you the dreams of adolescence.

I was going, by a road scarcely marked, between the wheat fields and the sea. One smelled indeed the sweet smell of the ripe fields and the sharp odor of the sea-

weed. I was going straight ahead without thinking of anything, continuing my journey begun fifteen days before, a tour of Brittany by the coasts. I felt myself strong, agile, happy and gay. I was going. . . .

And I began to dream of delicious things, as all young people dream, in a fashion puerile and charming. How swiftly it flies, this age of reverie, the single happy age of existence! Never are you solitary, never are you sad, never morose or desolate, since you carry in yourself the divine faculty of losing yourself in hopes, as soon as you are alone. What a fairy land where everything comes to pass, in the hallucination of your wandering thought! How beautiful is life under the golden illusion of dreams!

I began to dream. Of what? Of all that one expects constantly, of all that one desires,—of fortune, glory, woman. And all the time I was going with rapid steps, caressing with my hand the yellow spears of wheat, which bent under my fingers and tickled my flesh as if I had touched hairs.

I skirted a little promontory, and I saw on the narrow coast a white house built upon three terraces which descended to the strand.

Why did the sight of this house make me start with joy? How can I tell? Often in traveling thus you find some out-of-the-way corners of the country which you seem to have known a long time, so familiar are they to you, and so much they please your heart. Is it possible that one may never have seen them before?—that one may not have lived there formerly? Everything se-

duces you, enchants you, the sweet line of the horizon, the disposition of the trees, the color of the sand.

Oh, the pretty house upon its high terraces! Some large fruit trees had grown along these terraces, which descended toward the water like giant steps. And each one carried on its top, like a crown of gold, a long bouquet of Spanish broom in flower!

I stopped, seized with love for this abode. How I should have loved to possess it, to live there, always!

I approached the gate, my heart beating with desire, and I saw on one of the pillars of the barrier a large inscription, "FOR SALE." I experienced from this a pleasurable shock, as if some one had offered, had given me the house! Why? . . . Yes, why?—I cannot answer.

"For Sale." Then it hardly belonged to some one, it might belong to any one, to me, to me! Why this joy, this sensation of gaiety profound, inexplicable? Notwithstanding, I knew very well that I could not purchase it—how could I have paid for it? No matter, it was for sale! The bird in the cage belongs to its master, the bird in the air is mine, not belonging to any other.

And I entered the garden. Oh! the charming garden with its estrades placed the one above the other, its espaliers with long arms like crucified martyrs, its tufts of golden broom, and two old fig trees at the end of each terrace.

When I was upon the last I looked toward the horizon. The little coast stretched to my feet, round and sandy, separated from the deep water by three great black rocks, which closed the entrance and broke the waves on days of heavy sea.

On the promontory in front were two enormous stones, one standing upright, the other prostrate in the grass, a menhir and a dolmen, like two strange spouses petrified by some awful malediction, who seemed always to regard the little house whose building they had witnessed —they who had known this solitary bay during ages!— the little house which they would yet see collapse, crumble to pieces, fly away, disappear,—the little house "For Sale."

Oh, old dolmen and old menhir, how I love you!

And I rang at the door as I would have done at my own house. A woman came to admit me, a little old woman dressed in black and wearing a white cap, who resembled a nun. It seemed to me that I knew this woman, also.

I said to her, "You are not a Bretonne, are you?"

She answered, "No, Monsieur, I am from Lorraine." She added, "Do you come to see the house?"

"Eh!—yes, of course."

And I entered. I recognized everything, it seemed to me,—the walls, the furniture. I was almost astonished at not finding my canes in the vestibule.

I passed into the parlor, a pretty parlor carpeted with mats, and which overlooked the sea through three large windows. On the chimney-piece were some Chinese statuettes and a large photograph of a woman. I went toward it at once, persuaded that I should recognize her, also. And I *did* recognize her, although certain that I had never met her. It was she, herself, she whom I was expecting, whom I was desiring, whom I was calling, whose face was then haunting my dreams. She, she whom one

seeks always, everywhere, she whom you are going to see in the street presently, whom you are going to meet on the road in the country as soon as you see a red parasol over the wheat; she, who ought to be already arrived at the hotel where I stop in my journey, in the parlor whose door opens before me.

It was she, assuredly, indubitably *She!* I knew her by her eyes which looked straight at me, by her hair dressed in the English manner, by her mouth especially, by that smile which I had anticipated for a long time.

I asked at once, "Who is this woman?"

The servant with the nun's headdress answered drily, "It is Madame."

I resumed, "Is she your mistress?"

She replied with her devout, hard air, "Oh! no, Monsieur."

I sat down and I said, "Now, tell me all about it."

She remained stupefied, motionless, silent.

I insisted, "She is the proprietress of this house, then?"

"Oh! no, Monsieur."

"To whom, then, does this house belong?"

"To my master, Monsieur Tournelle."

I pointed a finger at the portrait. "And this woman, what is she?"

'It is Madame."

"Your master's wife?"

"Oh! no, Monsieur."

"His mistress, then?"

The nun did not answer. I rejoined, bitten by a vague jealousy, a confused anger against this man who had found this woman:

"Where are they now?"

The servant murmured, "Monsieur is in Paris, but as for Madame, I do not know."

I started: "Ah! then they are no longer together."

"No, Monsieur."

I was cunning, and in a grave voice went on: "Tell me what happened, I shall perhaps be able to render your master a service. I know this woman—she is a wicked creature!"

The old servant scrutinized me and before my open, frank air took confidence.

"Oh! sir, she made my master very unhappy. He met her in Italy and brought her back with him, as if he had married her. She sang very well. He loved her, Monsieur, so that it was pitiful to see him. They made a journey in this country last year, and they found this house which had been built by a fool, a true madman, in order to install himself at a distance of six miles from the village. Madame wished to buy it at once, in order to remain here with my master. And so he purchased it, just to give her pleasure. They stayed here all last summer, Monsieur, and nearly all the winter. And then one morning at breakfast time, Monsieur calls me: 'Césarine, has Madame returned?' 'No, Monsieur.'

"We waited all the day. My master was like a madman. We sought everywhere. We did not find her. She was gone, Monsieur, we never learned where or how."

Oh, what joy invaded me! I wished to embrace the nun, to take her by the waist and make her dance in the parlor! Ah! she was gone, she had escaped, she had left

him, fatigued and disgusted with him. How happy I was!

The old servant resumed: "My master almost died of vexation and sorrow, and he returned to Paris, leaving me with my husband to sell the house. We are asking twenty thousand francs for it."

But I heard no more! I was thinking of *Her!* And all at once it seemed to me that I had only to continue my journey, in order to find her; that she ought to return to the country this spring to see the house, her pretty house which she would have loved so much without *him.*

I threw ten francs into the old woman's hands, I seized the photograph, and I fled, kissing wildly the sweet face on the card.

I regained the road and took up my march again, still regarding the picture of—*Her!* What joy that she was free, that she had escaped! Certainly I should meet her to-day or to-morrow, this week or the following one, since she had quitted him. She had left him because my hour was come!

She was free, somewhere in the world. I had only to find her, since now I knew her.

And always I caressed the bending heads of the ripe wheat, I drank the marine air, which swelled my breast, I felt the sun kiss my face. I was going on—I was going, wild with happiness, drunk with hope. I was going, sure of meeting her presently and of bringing her back to occupy, in *our* turn, the little house "For Sale." How pleased she would be there this time!

Of Maupassant's work as a whole, perhaps the sketches

of peasant life in Normandy are of the greatest value and most enduring interest. There he was brought up and he was not too young when transplanted to Paris. In these Norman stories, some of which follow, his art is seen at its best and his knowledge of life at its surest and fullest. "The Little Cask," like its better known fellow, "A Piece of String," and many another, is a masterpiece in miniature, effectively marking those qualities which have earned for Maupassant the title of king of short story writers. They have also procured for him the singular but apt characterization of "the humorist who never laughs."

M. M.

THE FARMER

The Baron du Treilles had said to me: "Would you like to come and open the hunting season with me in my farm of Marinville? You would delight me, my brave fellow. Besides, I am all alone. This hunting ground is of access so difficult and the house itself so primitive that I dare bring there only my most intimate friends."

I had accepted.

We started then on Saturday by railroad for Normandy. At the station of Alvimare we got off and the Baron René, showing me a country carryall to which was harnessed a skittish horse driven by a tall, white-haired peasant said: "Behold our coach, my friend!"

The man reached a hand to his landlord, and the Baron pressed it warmly, saying:

"Well, Maitre Lebrument, how goes it?"

"Always the same, M'sieu le Baron."

We mounted into this poultry cage suspended and shaken over two enormous wheels. The young horse, after shying violently, started at a gallop, throwing us into the air like packages; each return upon the wooden seat made me horribly sick.

The peasant kept repeating in his calm, monotonous voice: "There, there, go slow, Moutard, go slow." But Moutard gave little heed to him and gamboled like a goat.

Our two dogs behind us, in the empty part of the cage, were standing up and sniffing the air of the plains, which betrayed odors of game.

The Baron contemplated in the distance, with pensive eye, the wide Norman country, undulating and melancholy, like an immense English park, a boundless park, where the farmyards, surrounded with two or four rows of trees and full of dwarf apple trees that hide the houses, outline as far as eye can reach, that perspective of woods and thickets which artistic gardeners aim at in tracing the limits of princely estates. And René du Treilles murmured suddenly:

"I love this country; I have my roots here!"

He was a pure-blooded Norman, big and tall, a little paunchy, of that old race of adventurers who went to found kingdoms on the shores of every sea. He was about fifty years old, ten years younger perhaps than the farmer who was conducting us. The latter was a skeleton, a peasant all bones covered with skin without flesh—one of those men who live a century.

After two hours' jolting on the rocky roads across this green and monotonous plain, the wagon entered one of those yards with apple trees and stopped before an ancient dilapidated building; here an old woman servant was waiting, with a young lad who seized the horse.

We entered the house. The kitchen, black with smoke, was lofty and vast. The copper vessels and crockery shone in reflections from the great hearth. A cat slept on a chair; a dog slept under the table. One smelled inside there milk, apples, smoke, and that indescribable odor of old peasant houses; odor of the earthen floor, of the

walls, of the furniture, odor of old spilled soups, of old washings and of old inhabitants, odor of beasts and of persons mingled, of things and of beings; odor of time, of time passed.

I went out again to look at the yard. It was very large, full of old apple trees, squat and twisted and covered with fruits, which were falling into the grass around them. In this yard the Norman perfume of apples was as strong as that of orange trees on Southern shores.

Four lines of beeches surrounded this enclosure. They were so tall that they seemed to reach the clouds in this hour of falling night, and their heads, through which the evening wind passed, were shaken wildly as they chanted a sad and endless plaint.

I returned. The Baron was warming his feet and hearing his farmer tell of the things of the country. He was relating the marriages, the births, the deaths, then the fall in the price of wheat and the news of the cattle. La Veularde (a cow purchased at Veules) had had her calf in mid-June. The cider had not been famous the last year. The apricot trees continued to disappear from the country.

Then we dined. It was a good country dinner, simple and abundant, long and tranquil. And during the meal I was reminded of the particular sort of friendly familiarity which had struck me at first between the Baron and the peasant.

Outside the trees continued to moan under the gusts of night wind, and our two dogs, shut up in the stable, cried and howled in a terrible way. The fire was dying in the

great chimney. The woman servant had gone to bed. Maître Lebrument said in his turn:

"If you permit me, M'sieu le Baron, I will go to bed. I am not in the habit of staying up late."

The Baron gave him his hand and said, "Go, my friend," in a tone so cordial that I could not forbear asking as soon as the man had disappeared: "This farmer is very devoted to you?"

"Better than that, my dear fellow, it is a drama, an old drama entirely simple and very sad which attracts me to him. Here is the story. . . .

"You know my father was a Colonel of cavalry. He had had as orderly this garçon, to-day an old man, son of a farmer. Then, when my father resigned from the army, he took into his service this soldier who was about forty years old. I was thirty. We lived then in our château of Valrenne, near Caudebec-en-Caux.

"At that time my mother had a chamber-maid who was one of the prettiest girls you ever saw; blonde, vivacious, lively, slender, a true soubrette,—the ancient soubrette now disappeared. To-day these creatures go to the bad at once. Paris, by means of the railroads, attracts them, lures them, seizes them as soon as they mature, those hearty lasses who in old days remained simple servants. Every man that passes, like the recruiting sergeant formerly seeking conscripts, samples and debauches them, and as maids now we have only the refuse of the female race, all that is coarse, repulsive, common and deformed, too ugly for gallantry.

"Well, this girl was charming and I kissed her some-

times in dark corners. Nothing more—oh! nothing more, I swear. She was virtuous, besides; and I respected my mother's house, which your scapegraces to-day are not much in the habit of doing.

"Now it happened that my father's valet, the former trooper and the old farmer whom you have just seen, fell madly in love with this girl. At first we noticed that he was forgetting everything—that he was continually wool-gathering. My father would often say to him:

" 'Come now, Jean, what's the matter with you? Are you sick?'

"He would answer: 'No, no, M'sieu le Baron, there is nothing the matter with me.'

"He grew thin; then he broke glasses while serving at table and dropped plates. We thought he was suffering from a nervous ailment, and we called in the doctor, who believed there were symptoms of spinal disease. Then my father, full of solicitude for his old servant, decided to send him to a hospital. Hearing this, the man confessed.

"He chose one morning while his master was shaving, and in a timid voice:

" 'M'sieu le Baron . . .'

" 'My garçon . . .'

" 'What I need, you see, is not medicine . . .'

" 'Ah! What then?'

" 'It is marriage!'

"My father, astonished, turned round.

" 'You say . . . You say? . . . What?'

" 'It's marriage I need.'

" 'Marriage. You are then, you are then . . . in love . . . animal?'

" 'That's just it, M'sieu le Baron.' My father laughed so immoderately that my mother cried through the wall: 'What is the matter with you, Gontran?'

"He answered, 'Come here, Catherine.' And when she had entered, he related to her, his eyes full of mirthful tears, how his imbecile of a valet had become stupidly sick from love.

"Instead of laughing, Mamma was compassionate.

" 'Who is it that you love so much, my garçon?'

"He declared, without hesitation, 'It is Louise, Madame la Baronne.'

"Mamma rejoined gravely: 'Well, we must try to arrange all that for the best.'

"Louise was then called and questioned by my mother; and she answered that she knew very well of Jean's flame, that he had declared himself several times, but that she didn't want him. She refused to say why.

"Two months passed during which time father and mother constantly pressed her to marry Jean. As she swore that she loved no one else, she was unable to give any serious reason for her refusal. Father at last overcame her resistance with a fat purse of money; and they were established as farmers on the land where we are to-day. They left the château and I saw no more of them during three years. At the end of three years I learned that Louise had died of consumption. But my father and my mother died in their turn, and I was two years more without seeing Jean.

"Finally, one autumn toward the end of October, the idea came to me of hunting on this property, which had been carefully preserved and which my farmer asserted to be full of game.

"I arrived then one night in this house—a night of rain. I was astounded to find my father's ancient orderly with snow-white hair, since he could not have been more than forty-five or forty-six years old.

"I made him dine with me, sitting at this table where we now are. It was raining in torrents. One heard the water strike the roof, the walls and the windows, and pour a perfect deluge in the yard. My dog howled in the stable as do ours to-night.

"Abruptly, after the woman servant had gone to bed, the man murmured:

" 'M'sieu le Baron . . .'

" 'Well, Maître Jean?'

" 'I have something to tell you.'

" 'Say on, Maître Jean.'

" 'It is . . . ah . . . ah . . . that it bothers me.'

" 'Tell it, nevertheless.'

" 'You remember Louise, my wife?'

" 'Surely I remember her.'

" 'Well, she charged me to tell you a thing.'

" 'What thing?'

" 'A . . . a . . . as you might say, a confession.'

" 'Ah . . . what then?'

" 'I . . . I . . . should like better not to tell you, all the same . . . but I must . . . I must. Well, it was not of the chest that she died . . . it was of grief . . . there it is out at last and ended.

" 'As soon as she came here she fell away and changed so you would not have known her, at the end of six months, not have known her, M'sieu le Baron. It was all as before marrying her, only different, entirely different.

" 'I had the doctor come. He said she had a disease of the liver. Then I bought some drugs, drugs, drugs, more than three hundred francs' worth. But she did not wish to take them. She said: "It's not worth the trouble, my poor Jean; 'twill all be for nothing."

" 'I saw, indeed, that there was some hidden sickness at bottom. And then I found her weeping often. I knew not what to do, no, I knew not what to do. I bought her dresses, bonnets, pomade for her hair, earrings. Nothing was of any use. And I understood that she was going to die.

" 'Now one night toward the end of November, a snowy night, when she had not left her bed during the day, she told me to go for a priest. I went for him.

" 'As soon as he had come:

" 'Jean,' she said, 'I am going to make you my confession. I owe it to you. Listen, Jean. I have never deceived you, never. Neither before nor after marriage, never. Monsieur le Curé is here to tell it, he who knows my soul. Well, listen, Jean, if I die, it is because I have not been able to console myself for leaving the château . . . because I had too much . . . too much friendship for M'sieu le Baron René. Too much friendship, you understand, nothing but friendship. That is killing me. When I could see him no more I felt that I was dying. If I had seen him I would have lived; only seen him, nothing more. I want you to tell him this one day, later, when I shall be gone. You will tell him? Swear it . . . swear it, Jean, before the priest. It will console me to know that he will know some day that I died of that. There! . . . swear it.'

" 'I promised, M'sieu le Baron. And I have kept my word with the faith of an honest man.'

"And he was silent again, his eyes fixed on mine.

"Cristi! my dear fellow, you have no idea of the emotion that seized me on hearing this poor devil, whose wife I had killed without suspecting it, relate me such a story on such a night of storm, in this kitchen.

"I stammered: 'My poor Jean! my poor Jean!'

"He murmured: 'It is all over with now, M'sieu le Baron. We can do nothing, neither the one or the other. It is ended.'

"I took his hand across the table and I began to weep.

"He asked: 'Do you wish to see her grave?'

"I bowed assent, not caring to speak more.

"He rose, lighted a lantern, and behold us going through the rain; our lantern showing fitfully the oblique drops, rapid as arrows.

"He opened a gate and I saw some black wooden crosses. He said suddenly, 'There it is,' pointing to a slab of marble lying upon a tomb, and placed his lantern upon it in order that I might be able to read the inscription.

To Louise Hortense Marinet,
Wife of Jean François Lebrument, farmer,
She was a Faithful Wife. May God Rest Her Soul.

"We were on our knees in the mud, he and I, with the lantern between us; and I watched the rain strike the white marble, rebounding in a watery spray, then flow over the four sides of the cold, inpenetrable stone. And

I thought of the heart of her who lay dead there. . . . Oh, poor heart! . . . poor heart!

"Since then I return here every year. And I know not why, but I feel troubled like a culprit before this man, who has always the air of forgiving me."

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THE CHRISTENING

Before the farm gate the men waited, dressed in their Sunday best. The May sun poured its clear light on the blossoming apple trees, round like immense white, red and perfumed bouquets, and which covered the whole yard as if with a roof of flowers. There fell constantly from them a snow of small petals which flew about and kept whirling until they were lost in the deep grass, where the dandelions burned like flames and the wild poppies seemed drops of blood.

A sow with enormous belly and distended udders lay asleep on the side of a dungheap, while a litter of little pigs played around her, with their tails twisted like a cord.

Suddenly, down there behind the farm trees, a church bell tinkled. Its iron voice cast into the joyous heaven a feeble and distant call. A flight of swallows passed like arrows across the blue space enclosed by the lofty, motionless beeches. An odor of the stable came sometimes, mingled with the sweet and sugared breath of the apple trees.

One of the men standing at the gate turned toward the house and cried: "Come on, come on, Melina; don't you hear the bell?"

He was perhaps thirty years old, a tall peasant whom

the hard labor of the fields had not yet bent or deformed. His father, an old man, knotty as an oak, with twisted legs and knobby wrists, observed, "The women are never ready,—at first!"

The old man's other two sons began to laugh, and one, turning to the eldest brother who had called first, said to him: "Go after them, Polyte—they will not come before noon."

And the young man went into the house.

A band of ducks, which had halted near some peasants, raised a quacking, while flapping their wings; then they started toward the pond with their slow and balanced gait.

Now, at the door which had remained open, a stout woman appeared, carrying a two-months'-old child. The white strings of her tall bonnet hung down her back and fell upon a red shawl, blazing like a fire; the infant, wrapped in white linen, reposed upon her prominent stomach.

Then the mother came, tall and strong, fresh and smiling, hardly nineteen years old, holding her husband's arm. Followed the two grandmothers, withered like old apples, with evident fatigue in their jaded loins so long twisted by rude and patient labor. One of them was a widow; she took the arm of the grandfather who had stayed at the gate, and they started at the head of the procession, behind the child and the midwife. The rest of the family followed, the youngest carrying paper bags filled with candies and sugar plums.

Down there the little bell rang incessantly, calling with

all its strength the frail mite whom the church awaited. Some boys climbed upon the hedges; some people appeared at the fences; some farm-girls stopped between two buckets of milk, which they set on the ground in order to gape at the baptismal party.

The nurse, triumphant, carried her living burden, avoiding the pools of water in the hollow road between the slopes planted with trees. And the old people came with ceremony, marching a bit zigzag on account of their age and aches; and the younger ones wished to dance and stared at the girls who came to see them pass; and the father and mother walked gravely, more serious, following this child who would replace them later in life, who would continue their name in the country—the name of Dentu, a name well known to the canton.

They turned into the plain and went across the fields, in order to avoid the long way round by the road. Now they saw the church with its pointed steeple. An opening pierced it just under the slate roof, and something was moving in there, going and coming with a quick movement, passing and repassing behind the narrow window. It was the bell that kept ringing always, crying to the new-born to come, for the first time, into the house of the good God.

A dog started to follow them; the children tossed him some sugar-plums, and he frolicked about the procession.

The church door stood open. The priest, a tall young man, with red hair, thin and strong—a Dentu also, uncle of the babe and brother of its father—waited before the altar. And he baptized, according to the rites of the

church, his nephew Prosper Cæsar, who began to cry as soon as he had tasted the symbolic salt.

When the ceremony was ended the family stood about the church door while the priest removed his vestments; then they started for home. They went quickly now, for they were thinking of dinner. All the brats of the country followed, and each time the youngsters flung bonbons among them, there was a terrible row, hand-to-hand battles, faces punched and hair torn out. Even the dog threw himself into the struggle in order to get his share of the sweets; pulled by the tail, by the ears, and by the paws, he was fully as obstinate as the gamins.

The nurse, a little tired, said to the priest who was marching near her: "Father, would you mind holding your nephew a bit while I limber myself a little? I have a cramp in the stomach."

The priest took the child, whose white robe made a great bright stain on his black soutane, and he embraced him, though uneasy with his light bundle, not knowing how to hold it or to place it. Everybody started to laugh. One of the grandmothers called from the rear of the procession, "Say, Father, you are not grieving, are you, because you will never have anything like that?" . . .

The priest made no reply. He was going with great strides, staring fixedly into the blue eyes of the child, whose round cheeks he wished to kiss. Yielding to the desire, he raised the child to his face and kissed him long and lingeringly.

The father cried: "Say, Father, if you want one like that, you have only to say it, you know." And they began to joke as do the people of the fields.

As soon as they were seated at table the heavy rustic gayety burst like a storm. The two other sons were soon to be married, and their fiancées were present, having come only for the dinner. The guests kept up a running fire of allusions to all the future generations which these marriages promised. There were gross words, strongly spiced, which made the blushing girls titter and caused the men to double in two with mirth; they pounded on the table with their fists, yelling and choking with enjoyment. The father and grandfather were unwearied at this sort of pleasantry. The mother smiled; the old women took their part of the fun and also contributed some broad jests.

Accustomed to this coarse peasant humor, the priest sat quietly beside the nurse, teasing his nephew's little mouth with his finger, in order to make him laugh. He seemed surprised at the sight of this child, as if he had never seen another. He considered him with a reflective attention, with a thoughtful gravity, with a tenderness awakened in the depths of his nature, a strange tenderness, singular, lively and a little sad, for this tiny fragile being who was his brother's child.

He heard nothing, he saw nothing, he was simply contemplating the child. He wished to take it upon his knees, for he felt yet on his chest and in his heart the sweet sensation of having carried it a little while ago, on returning from church. He remained deeply disturbed before this embryo man as before an ineffable mystery of which he had never thought; a mystery august and holy, the incarnation of a new soul, the great mystery of the life which is beginning, of the love which awakens, of

the race which continues itself,—of humanity which marches on forever!

The nurse was eating, her face red, her eyes shining; she was annoyed by the little one who kept putting her away from the table.

"Give him to me," said the priest, "I am not hungry."

And he took the child. Then all disappeared around him, everything was effaced, and he sat there with his eyes fixed on this pink, chubby face. Little by little, the warmth of the small body through its wrappings and his soutane, reached his legs, penetrated him with a caress, very light, very sweet, very chaste, a delicious caress which brought tears to his eyes.

The noise of the guests became terrific, and the child, scared by the clamor, began to cry. A voice called, "Say, Father, why don't you nurse him?" And an explosion of laughter shook the room. But the mother rose, took her son and carried him into a neighboring chamber. She returned after a few minutes, saying that he was sleeping tranquilly in his cradle.

And the festivity went on. The meats, the vegetables, the cider and the wine melted into their mouths as if a whirlpool had swallowed them; stomachs swelled, eyes brightened, minds began to wander.

The night was falling when they reached the coffee. During a long time the priest had not been seen, though nobody had remarked his absence.

Finally the young mother got up and went to look at the baby. It was quite dark now. She felt her way into the bedroom, advancing with her arms stretched out, in order not to strike the furniture. But a singular noise

stopped her short, and she retreated in terror, sure that she had heard some one move. She entered the dining hall very pale and trembling, and told of her fright. All the men rose in tumult, drunk and menacing; and the father, with lamp in hand, leaped into the chamber.

The priest, on his knees beside the cradle, was sobbing; his forehead on the pillow where rested the child's head

CLOCHETTE

How strange they are,—those old memories which haunt you so that you can never get rid of them!

This one is so old, so old that I am quite unable to understand how it has remained so lively and tenacious in my mind. I have since witnessed so many things sinister, disturbing or terrible that it astonishes me that I cannot pass a day, not a single day, without the face of Mother Clochette rising before my eyes, such as I knew her formerly, a long time ago, when I was ten or twelve years old.

She was an old seamstress who came once a week, every Wednesday, to mend the linen at our house. My parents lived in one of those country residences called a château, which is simply an antique mansion with gabled roofs, four or five farms being usually grouped around and dependent upon it.

The village,—a large village or burgh,—was less than a mile away, gathered about the church, a structure of red bricks that had become black with time and weather.

So every Wednesday Mother Clochette came between half-past six and seven o'clock in the morning, and at once went upstairs to the linen room where she began her day's work.

She was a tall, thin woman, and bearded,—for she

had beard all over her face, a surprising beard growing in the shape of incredible bunches and curly tufts across her large face, which suggested a gendarme in petticoats. There was hair on her nose, under her nose, on her chin and cheeks; and her eyebrows were of an extravagant length and thickness, all gray, tufted and bristling, having entirely the appearance of a pair of moustaches placed there by mistake.

She limped, not like ordinary cripples, but like a ship at anchor. When she balanced her tall, bony, distorted body upon her good leg, she seemed to gather herself up as if to mount upon an immense wave; then suddenly plunging as if to disappear into an abyss, she sank down to the earth. Her gait gave you an idea of a storm with its strange balancing motion; and her head, always covered with an immense white bonnet whose ribbons floated over her back, seemed to traverse the horizon, from north to south and from south to north, at each of her movements.

I adored Mother Clochette. Immediately on getting up Wednesday mornings, I mounted to the sewing room where I found her already installed at her work, with a little stove under her feet. As soon as I came, she made me take this heater and sit over it, so that I might not catch cold in the large, chilly room, placed under the roof.

She told me stories while darning the linen with her long, hooked, but quick and skilful fingers. Her eyes behind her large magnifying spectacles—for age had weakened her sight—seemed to me enormous, strangely profound, double.

She had, so far as I may recall, the things she told me and which deeply moved my childish heart,—the magnanimous soul of a poor woman. She saw things in a large and simple fashion. She related to me the happenings of the village,—the story of a cow that had escaped from the stable and had been found one morning in front of Prosper Malet's mill, watching the wooden wings go round; or the story of a hen's egg discovered in the church belfry, without anybody understanding what sort of fowl could have come to lay it there; or the story of Jean-Jean Pilas' dog that had brought back from a distance of ten miles from the village, his master's breeches, stolen by a vagabond while drying before the door after a course in the rain. She told me these simple adventures in such a manner that they took in my mind the proportions of unforgettable dramas, of grand and mysterious poems; and the ingenious tales invented by the poets which my mother used to relate to me at night, had not the savor, nor the largeness, nor the power of the old peasant woman's recitals.

Now one Wednesday, when I had been all morning with Mother Clochette, listening to her stories, I wished to go upstairs to the sewing room again in the afternoon, after having been with a servant to gather hazelnuts in the wood behind the farm of Noir-Pré. I recall all that as clearly as the things of yesterday.

On opening the door of the linen room, I saw the old seamstress stretched on the floor beside her chair, lying face down, her arms extended, holding still her needle in one hand and in the other one of my little shirts. One of

her legs, in a blue stocking,—the good one without doubt,—was lengthened under her chair; and the spectacles shone near the wall, having rolled far from her.

I ran screaming downstairs. There was a great hurrying and commotion; and in a few minutes I learned that Mother Clochette was dead!

I should not know how to describe the emotion, deep, poignant, and terrible, which convulsed my childish heart. I crept down to the parlor and went to hide in a dark corner, in an immense old arm-chair, where I got on my knees to weep. I stayed there a long time, no doubt, for the night came.

Suddenly som[illegible]entered with a lamp, but did not see me, and I heard my father and mother talking with the doctor, whose voice I recognized.

They had sent for him at once and he was explaining the cause of the accident. I understood nothing of all that. Then he sat down and accepted a glass of liquor, with a biscuit.

He was talking always, and what he said then endures with me and will indeed remain engraved on my soul until the hour of my death! I believe that I can even reproduce absolutely the words he used.

"Ah!" he said, "the poor woman!—she was my first patient in this place. She broke her leg the day of my arrival, and I hadn't time to wash my hands on getting down from the coach, when they came to seek me in all haste: for it was very grave, very grave.

"She was seventeen years old then, and a very beautiful girl, very beautiful, very beautiful! Would you have believed it? As to her story, I have never told it, and no-

body excepting myself and one other who is not in the country has ever learned it. Now that she is dead, I may be less discreet.

"At that time there came to establish himself in the village a young assistant schoolmaster who had a handsome face and the dashing form of a young military officer. All the girls ran after him, but he pretended to disdain them, having a great fear, besides, of the head of the school, his superior, Father Grabu, who got out of the wrong side of the bed a good many mornings.

"Father Grabu already employed as a seamstress the beautiful Hortense, who has just died in your house, and whom they called later Clochette—after her accident. The assistant master distinguished the beautiful girl with his notice, and she, no doubt, was flattered to be chosen by this haughty conqueror. She loved him, too, and he obtained the favor of a first tête-à-tête with her in the loft over the schoolhouse, at the end of a day's sewing.

"She made a pretence then of going to her home, but instead of descending the stairway on leaving the house, she mounted it and went to hide herself in the hay, in order to await her lover. He joined her there presently, and was beginning to talk sweet to her when the garret-door opened again, and the master of the school appeared. He demanded:

" 'What are you doing up there, Sigisbert?'

"Feeling that he would be caught, the young schoolmaster, panic-stricken, answered stupidly:

" 'I just came up to rest a little on the hay, Monsieur Grabu.'

"The loft was very high, very large and absolutely

dark. Sigisbert pushed the frightened young girl toward the rear, whispering excitedly: 'Go back there; hide your self! I shall lose my place. Go back—get out of the way—hide yourself!'

"The master, hearing an indistinct murmur, rejoined: 'You are not alone there, then?'

" 'Oh, yes! Monsieur Grabu.'

" 'But you're not, since I hear you speaking.'

" 'I swear to you I am, Monsieur Grabu.'

" 'That is what I am going to find out,' replied the old man, and double-locking the door, he descended to get a candle.

"Then the young man, a coward of rare quality, lost his head and becoming furious, urged the girl repeatedly: 'Go on!—hide yourself, so that he shall not find you. You are going to take the bread out of my mouth for the rest of my life! You are going to destroy my career! . . . Hide yourself, will you?'

"They heard the key again turning in the lock.

"Hortense ran to the window which gave upon the street, opened it quickly and then said in a low and resolute voice: 'You will come and pick me up when he is gone!' And she leaped!

"Father Grabu found nobody and redescended, very much perplexed.

"A quarter of an hour later Sigisbert came to my house and told me of the adventure. The young girl had remained at the foot of the wall, incapable of rising, having fallen two stories. I went there to seek her, with the lover. It was raining torrents and I brought to my house this unfortunate, whose right leg was broken in three places,

the bones showing through the flesh. She did not complain, but said only with an admirable resignation! 'I am punished, well punished!'

"I sent for help and also for the girl's parents, for whom I invented the fable of a runaway carriage that had thrown her down and maimed her in front of my door. They believed me, and the police searched vainly during a month for the author of the accident.

"That's all. And I say this woman was a heroine—of the race of those who have accomplished the noblest historic deeds.

"It was her only love. She died a virgin. She was a martyr, a grand soul, of devotion sublime. And if I had not admired her absolutely, I should not have told you her story, which I never wished to tell anyone during her life—you understand why."

The doctor ended. Mamma was weeping. Papa muttered some words that I failed to catch; then they left the room.

And I stayed there on my knees in the old chair, sobbing, while I listened to a strange noise of heavy steps and jarring sounds on the stair.

They were carrying away the body of Clochette.

THE POSSESSED

DOCTOR BONENFANT searched his memory, repeating in a low voice: "A Christmas story? . . . A Christmas story? . . ." And suddenly he cried: "Yes, I have one, and a very strange one at that. It is a fantastic tale, I assure you. I have seen a miracle! Yes, ladies, a miracle, on Christmas night.

"You are astonished to hear me speak thus—me who have little faith in anything. All the same, I have seen a miracle. I have seen it, I say, with my own eyes,—is not that what you call *seen?*

"Was I much surprised at it? No, for I do not believe in your beliefs: I believe in faith, and I know that it can move mountains. I could cite you some examples—but I should bore you, and I should also risk spoiling the effect of my Christmas tale.

"At the outset, I will confess that if I was not strongly convinced and converted by what I saw, I was at least very much moved; and I shall try to tell my story simply, as though I had a peasant's unquestioning faith.

"I was then a county doctor, living in the village of Rolleville, in the midst of Normandy. The winter that year was terrible. With the end of November the snow came, after a week of frost. You saw in the distance heavy clouds coming from the north; and the white fall

of the flakes began. In one night all the country was buried.

"The farmhouses, isolated in their square yards behind their shelter of tall trees powdered with frost, seemed to sleep under the accumulation of thick, light foam. No living thing crossed the motionless country; only the crows in dense companies described long festoons on the sky, vainly seeking their life or sweeping down all together upon the livid fields and picking the snow with their large beaks.

"Nothing was to be heard but the vague and continuous fall of frozen white dust. That lasted eight full days; then the avalanche stopped. The earth had on its back a mantle of snow five feet thick.

"And for three weeks thereafter a sky clear as a blue crystal during the day and at night all sown with stars that might have been of ice, so rigorous was the vast heavenly space stretched above the uniform, hard and shining mantle of snow.

"The plain, the hedges, the sheltered elms, all seemed dead, killed by the cold. Neither man nor beast ventured out: only the cottage chimneys, scarfed with white, revealed the hidden life by their threads of smoke which rose straight in the glacial air.

"From time to time you heard the trees crack as if their branches had broken off under the bark, and sometimes a great limb detached itself and fell, the invincible frost petrifying the sap and severing the fibres. The habitations scattered here and there over the fields, seemed distant a hundrd leagues from one another. People lived as they could. Alone, I tried to visit my nearest

patients, exposing myself to a constant risk of being buried in some pitfall.

"I saw presently that a mysterious terror was hovering over the country. Such a scourge, people thought, was not natural. Some pretended that they heard voices in the night,—sharp whistling, passing cries.

"These cries and this whistling came without any doubt from birds of passage that voyage at twilight and fly in great flocks toward the south. But how will you talk reason to infatuated people? A fright took possession of all minds and every one expected some extraordinary event.

"Father Vatinel's forge was situated at the end of the hamlet of Epivent, on the turnpike, now invisible and deserted. Now, as people were running short of bread, the blacksmith decided to go to the village. He stopped some hours chatting at the six houses which form the centre of the community, took his bread and the news, and a little of the fear spread over the country. He started for home before night fell.

"Suddenly, while skirting a hedge, he thought he saw an egg on the snow; yes, an egg deposited there, very white, like all the rest of the world. He bent forward; it was an egg indeed. Where did it come from? What hen could have left her coop and come to lay it in such a place? The blacksmith was astonished and could make nothing of it; but he picked up the egg and carried it home to his wife.

" 'Look here, mother, an egg that I found on the road.'

"The good wife shook her head.

"'An egg on the road? In this weather! You're drunk, for sure.'

"'No, no, mistress, it was at the foot of a hedge and still warm, not frozen. I put it under my vest so it shouldn't get cold. Here it is, you shall eat it for your dinner.'

"The egg was slipped into the pot where the soup was simmering, and the blacksmith started in to relate the gossip of the countryside. His wife listened, very pale.

"'Sure I heard some whistles the other night, but they seemed to come from the chimney.'

"They sat down to table, they ate the soup first, then while the husband was spreading butter on his bread the wife took the egg and examined it with a suspicious eye.

"'If there was something in this egg?'

"'What do you think could be in it?'

"'How should I know?'

"'Go on then, eat it, and don't be a fool.'

"She broke the shell. It was an ordinary egg and very fresh. She began to eat it slowly, tasting it, putting it down and taking it up again. The husband said: 'Well, how does it taste?'

"She did not reply and she finished swallowing the egg; then suddenly she fixed a haggard, insane look upon her man, raised her arms, was seized with convulsions from head to foot and finally rolled on the ground, uttering horrible cries.

"All night long she struggled in frightful spasms, shaken with awful tremblings, deformed by hideous convulsions. The blacksmith, unable to hold her, was obliged to tie her down.

"She howled incessantly, without rest and with an indefatigable voice: 'I have it in my stomach! I have it in my stomach!'

"I was called next day. I prescribed the usual alleviatives without obtaining the least result. She was mad.

"Then, with incredible rapidity, in spite of the deep snow, the strange rumor ran from farm to farm: 'The blacksmith's wife is possessed!' And people came from everywhere, without daring to enter the house; one heard from afar the woman's frightful cries, uttered in a voice so strong that it did not seem to proceed from a human creature.

"The village curé, a simple old priest, was sent for. He ran in his surplice as if to a dying person, and stretching out his hands, he pronounced the formula of exorcism, while four men held down upon the bed the tortured woman, convulsed and foaming at the mouth.

"But the evil spirit was not chased. And Christmas came without any change in the terrible weather.

"The day before, the priest came to see me. 'I wish,' he said, 'to have this unfortunate creature brought to the midnight Mass. Perhaps God will perform a miracle in her favor in the same hour in which He was born of a woman.'

"I answered: 'I approve absolutely, Monsieur l'Abbé. If her mind should be struck by the ceremony (and nothing could be better calculated to impress her), she may be saved without other remedy.'

"The old priest murmured: 'You are not a believer,

Doctor, but you will help me, will you not? You charge yourself to bring her?'

"And I promised my aid.

"The evening came, then the night, and the church bell began to ring, casting its plaintive voice across the desolate space, upon the white and frozen extent of the snows. Some black objects, the peasants, came slowly, obedient to the summons. The full moon illuminated all the horizon with its wan light, rendering more visible the pale desolation of the fields. I had taken four strong men and with them I went to the forge.

"The possessed was howling always, fastened to her bed. We dressed her, in spite of her desperate resistance, and carried her away.

"The church, lighted and cold, was now full of people; the singers uttered their monotonous chant; the organ rolled; the little altar-bell tinkled, regulating the movements of the faithful. I shut up the woman and her keepers in the presbytery kitchen, awaiting the moment which I deemed favorable.

"I chose the instant which follows the Communion. All the peasants, men and women, had received their God, in order to appease His anger. A great silence hovered while the priest was completing the Divine Mystery.

"On my order the door was opened and my four helpers appeared, carrying the mad woman.

"As soon as she saw the lights, the crowd on their knees, the illuminated choir and the gilded altar, she fought with such fury that she almost escaped from us, and she screamed so terribly that a shudder passed visibly

over the congregation; all heads were raised; some people ran out in sheer fright.

"She had not the appearance of a woman, convulsed and twisted in our hands as she was; her face disfigured, her eyes mad.

"We dragged her to the steps of the altar and there we held her powerfully, half kneeling all of us, on the floor.

"The priest arose; he waited. As soon as he saw that we held her fast, he took in his hands the ostensorium encircled with rays of gold, with the white Host therein, and advancing some steps he raised it in both hands above his head, presenting it to the frightened glances of the demoniac.

"She was howling always, her eye fixed, riveted upon this dazzling object. The priest remained as motionless as a statue.

"And that lasted a long time, a long time.

"The woman seemed to be seized with fear; she contemplated the sacred receptacle fixedly, shaken still with awful but transient convulsions, and crying always, but with a voice less formidable.

"And that lasted a long time, a long time.

"One would have said that she could not lower her eyes, that they were riveted upon the Host; her shrieks died to a moan, her stiffened body weakened, relaxed.

"All the crowd were kneeling, with heads bowed to the floor.

"The possessed now lowered her eyelids rapidly, then raised them soon, as if unable to bear the sight of her God. Her moaning ceased. And then suddenly I saw that her eyes remained closed. She was sleeping the sleep

of the somnambulist, hypnotized . . . pardon! conquered by the persistent contemplation of the vessel with rays of gold; overthrown by the victorious Christ.

"They took her away, motionless, while the priest reascended toward the altar.

"The congregation, swept by a wave of religious emotion, intoned a *Te Deum.*

"And the blacksmith's wife slept forty hours without a break, then awoke without any memory of her possession or her deliverance.

"There's the miracle for you, ladies, as I witnessed it."

Doctor Bonenfant added somewhat gruffly, in the tone of one who finds himself contradicted:

"I was unable to refuse my written testimony to it."

THE LITTLE CASK

Maître Chicot, the tavern keeper of Épreville, stopped his tilbury at Mother Magloire's farm. He was a big, hearty fellow of forty, red-faced and paunchy, who passed among his neighbors for being sly and shrewd.

He tied his horse to the gate and entered the yard. He owned some land adjoining the old woman's farm, which property he had long coveted.

A score of times had he tried to purchase it, but Mother Magloire had always obstinately refused to sell. "I was born here and I will die here," she said.

He found her peeling potatoes before her door. Seventy-two years old, she was dry, withered, bent, but as indefatigable as a young girl. Chicot gave her a friendly tap on the back, then sat down near her on a stool.

"Well, Mother, how's the health—always good?"

"Not so bad. And you, Maît' Prosper?"

"Oh, I'm well enough, barring the rheumatism."

"Good—that's no ill news."

She said nothing more. Chicot watched her at work. Her crooked fingers, knotted and hard as a crab's claws, seized like pincers the greyish potatoes in a basket beside her, and quickly she turned them, removing long strips of peel under the blade of an old knife which she held in one hand. When the potato had become all yellow, she threw it into a bucket of water. Three daring

chickens, one after another, ventured to her petticoats to pick up the peelings, and then cluttered away hastily with prey in beak.

Chicot seemed hesitating, anxious, embarrassed, with something at his tongue's end that he found hard to say. Finally he decided.

"Now, look here, Mother Magloire . . ."

"Eh, eh, what is it, at your service?"

"This farm of yours, are you still unwilling to sell it to me?"

"No, no! Don't count on it. That is settled for good, and don't let us bring it up again."

"But listen, I have thought of an arrangement which would suit us both."

"What is it?"

"Here it is. You sell the farm to me, but you keep it just the same. You don't understand? Now follow my plan."

The old woman stopped peeling her potatoes and fixed on the tavern-keeper her quick eyes under their wrinkled lids.

He went on: "I'll make it plain to you. Each month I give you one hundred and fifty francs. Understand this well—each month I bring to you here, in my tilbury, thirty écus of one hundred sous. And nothing else is changed—not the smallest thing. You remain here at home, you don't trouble your head about me, you owe me nothing. All you do is to take my money. Does that suit you?"

He beamed on her with a joyous air, an air of frank good humor.

The old woman considered him distrustfully, seeking the snare in his words. She demanded: "Well, that is for me, you say, but the farm—how does this give it to you?"

He rejoined: "Don't worry about that. You stay here as long as the good God lets you live. You are at home, in your own place. Only you will sign a little paper at the notary's, so that when you pass on, the farm shall become mine. You have no children, only some nephews for whom you don't care a rap. Does it suit you? You keep your property during your life, and I give you thirty écus of one hundred sous per month. It is all to the good for you, isn't it?"

The old woman was surprised, disturbed, and tempted. She replied: "I don't say no, only I want to think about it. Come back next week and we'll talk it over again. I will then give you my answer."

Chicot thereupon went away, happy as a king who has just conquered an empire.

Mother Magloire remained thoughtful. She did not sleep that night. During four days she was in a fever of hesitation and uncertainty. She smelled a rat in Chicot's offer, but the thought of the thirty crowns per month, of this beautiful ringing silver money that would pour into her apron, that would fall upon her, as it were, from the heaven, without need of her doing anything for it,—ravaged her with desire.

Then she went to the notary and stated her case to him. He advised her to accept Chicot's offer, but urged her to demand fifty écus of one hundred sous in place of thirty; her farm being worth, at the very lowest, sixty thousand francs.

"If you should live fifteen years," said the notary, "he will only have paid in this way forty-five thousand francs."

Mother Magloire shivered at this perspective of fifty écus of one hundred sous per month. But she was suspicious always, fearing a thousand unforeseen things, hidden ruses, obscure stratagems; and she remained until night, harassing the notary with questions and unable to bring herself to a decision. At length she ordered him to draw up the paper, and she returned to her house as much confused as if she had drunk four pots of new cider.

When Chicot came for her answer, she fenced with him a long time, declaring that she did not want his bargain, but devoured by fear lest he might not consent to give the fifty pieces of one hundred sous. Finally, as he persisted, she told him what she wanted.

He had a shock of disappointment, and refused. Then, to win him over, she began to reason about her probable length of life.

"I haven't more than five or six years for sure. Here I am seventy-three, and not strong at that. The other night I thought I was going to die. It seemed as though my heart had stopped, and they had to carry me to bed."

But Chicot would not allow himself to be taken. "Go on, old squeeze, you're as solid as the church steeple, and will live to at least a hundred and ten. You will bury me for sure."

The whole day was wasted in discussion. But as the old woman stood firm, the tavern-keeper at last agreed to give the fifty crowns.

They signed the papers next day. And Mother Mag-

loire demanded ten écus for treat money to wet the bargain.

Three years passed. The good woman was carrying herself like a charm. She scarcely seemed a day older, and Chicot was in despair. It seemed to him that he had been paying this rent for fifty years; that he had been deceived, cheated, ruined. He went from time to time to visit the old woman, as one goes in July to the fields to see if the wheat is ripe for the sickle. She received him with a sly malice in her look. You would have said she was congratulating herself upon the clever trick she had played him; and he quickly got into his tilbury again, saying to himself: "Old scarecrow! are you never going to die! . . ."

He knew not what to do. He wished to strangle the old woman each time he saw her. He hated her with a ferocious, cunning hatred, the hatred of a peasant who thinks himself robbed. Then he cast about for means.

One day, finally, he called on her, rubbing his hands as he did the first time when he proposed to bargain. After chatting a few minutes:—

"Look here, Mother Magloire, why don't you come to dine at my house when you pass Épreville? People gossip about it; they say we are not good friends, and that makes me feel bad. You know at my house you pay nothing. I am not stingy about a dinner. So long as the heart bids you, come whenever you please, and I shall be happy."

Mother Magloire needed no urging, and two days after,

as she was going to market in her carriole driven by her farm hand Célestin, she boldly put up her horse at Maître Chicot's stable and claimed the promised dinner.

The tavern-keeper, glowing with smiles of welcome, treated her like a lady, served her bountifully with chicken, sausage, chitterling, leg of lamb, and bacon with cabbage. But she scarcely ate anything; frugal since childhood, having always lived on a little soup and a crust of bread and butter.

Chicot, disappointed, urged her warmly. She drank as little as she ate. She refused to take coffee.

He demanded, "But you will accept a little glass of something good to drink?"

"Oh, as to that, yes. I don't say no."

Then he shouted across the tavern: "Rosalie, bring the 'fine,' the private stock, the best in the house, do you hear?"

The servant appeared, carrying a long bottle ornamented with a paper vine leaf. Chicot filled two small glasses. "Taste that, Mother, it's the pure quill!"

The good woman sipped the liquor very slowly, with little swallows, making the pleasure last. When she had finished her glass, she upturned it and drained the last drop, then said: "Ah, yes, it *is* the fine!"

She hadn't finished speaking when Chicot poured for her a second glass. She wished to refuse, but it was too late; and she tasted it lingeringly like the first.

He wanted to give her a third treat, but she resisted. He insisted:

"Come now, why it's harmless as milk, you see; I drink ten, twelve of them without feeling it. It passes from

you like sugar. Nothing in the belly, nothing in the head—you would say it evaporates on the tongue. Really, there is nothing better for the health."

As she really wanted it, she yielded, but she took only half the glass.

Then Chicot cried in a burst of generosity: "See here, Mother, since you like it so well I'll give you a little cask, just to prove that we are always good friends." The good woman did not say nay to this, and she went away a little drunk.

The following day the tavern-keeper entered Mother Magloire's yard, and drew from the bottom of his carriage a little keg, hooped with iron. Then he wished to make her taste it, in order to prove that it was the same "fine," and when they had each drunk three glasses, he prepared to go, saying:

"And you know when this is gone, there's more where it came from—don't worry about that. I'm not miserly where you're concerned. The sooner it's finished the happier I shall be."

And he drove off.

He returned four days later. The old woman was sitting at her door cutting up bread for soup. He approached, said good day to her, came very close in order to smell her breath, and recognized a whiff of alcohol. Then his face cleared.

"You will offer me a glass of the 'fine,' won't you?" he said.

And they clinked two or three times.

Presently the rumor ran about the country that Mother

Magloire was getting drunk all alone. She was picked up, now in her kitchen, now in her yard, now along the neighboring roads; and she had almost to be carried to her home at times, being inert as a corpse.

Chicot went no more to see her, and when people spoke to him of the peasant woman, he would say with a sad face: "Isn't it unfortunate, at her age, to have formed the habit? You see when one is old, one has no resources. That will end by playing her a bad trick."

It did play her an evil trick, in sooth! She died the following winter, toward Christmas, having fallen drunk in the snow.

And Maître Chicot inherited the farm, saying: "That old fool! Why, if she hadn't soused she would have been good for ten years longer."

HIS WEDDING NIGHT *

(*Farce Normande*)

The procession advanced, unwinding itself like a ribbon in the hollow road shaded by the great trees that grew along the farm slopes. First came the newly married pair, then their relations, then the guests, then the country poor; finally, the children, who danced about the tail of the column, passed between the ranks, and even climbed the trees in order to get a better view.

The bridegroom, Jean Patu, was a handsome fellow, and the richest farmer of the country. Above all, he was a fanatical sportsman who threw away his good sense in gratifying this passion, and spent more money than he could afford on his dogs and keepers, his ferrets and his guns.

Rosalie Roussel, the bride, had been eagerly courted by all the eligible young men of the neighborhood, for they

* Maupassant's tales of Norman peasant life are the most valuable part of his literary bequest; they are truly "of the soil" and give the complete illusion of reality. It is doubtful if this side of the Frenchman's work has ever been equaled in the vigor and fidelity of the character-drawing and the stern brevity of the style. Most of these stories are of a tragic cast; the following, though in a light vein for Maupassant, is a good example of the *contes Normandes*.
M. M.

found her agreeable, and they knew also that she had a rich *dot*. But she had chosen Patu, perhaps because he pleased her better than the others, yet rather more, as a prudent Norman girl, for that he was the richest match.

When they had turned the boundary of the bridegroom's farm, four gun shots rang out, although they could not see the marksmen hidden in the ditches. At this salvo a heavy humor seized the men in the procession, and they laughed awkwardly in their stiff Sunday clothes. Leaving his wife, Patu leaped upon a farm-hand whom he had glimpsed behind a tree, took away the fellow's gun and fired a shot himself; all the time cutting up like a young colt.

Then the procession resumed its course under the apple trees already laden with fruit, through the tall grass and amidst the calves that stared solemnly with their big eyes, rose slowly and remained standing, their heads turned toward the wedding cortège.

On approaching the place of festivity the men became grave again. Some of them, the richer ones, strutted under high hats of shining silk, which seemed out of place in the country. Others sported ancient top-pieces with a long nap, like moleskin; the humblest wore caps.

All the women had shawls loosed at the back and the ends of which they held upon their arms in a ceremonious way. These shawls were flaming red and variegated; and their brightness seemed to astonish the black hens on the dunghill, the ducks at the pond, and the pigeons on the thatched roofs. All the green of the country, the green of the grass and the trees, was aggravated, as it were, by contact with this blazing purple, and the two colors

thus violently brought together became blinding under the noon-day sun.

The great farmhouse seemed to be waiting down there, at the end of a vault of apple trees. A kind of smoke came from the door and the open windows, and a thick odor of eatables was exhaled by the large building from all its openings and from its very walls.

Like a serpent the line of guests lengthened itself in order to cross the court. The first, reaching the house, broke the chain and scattered, while down there they were still entering in due order at the open gate. The ditches were now covered with children and the curious poor. There were constant volleys of gun shots, bursting forth on all sides at once, mingling in the air a smoke of powder with the odor which intoxicates like absinthe.

Before the door the women shook the dust from their dresses and untied the oriflammes which served as ribbons to their hats, undid their shawls and entered the house in order to free themselves of these ornaments.

The table was laid in the great farmhouse kitchen, which was capable of accommodating a hundred people.

They sat down at two o'clock. At nine o'clock they were still eating. The men, unbuttoned, in shirt-sleeves, red-faced from exertion, swallowed like whirlpools. Laughed the yellow cider, joyous, clear and golden in the tall glasses beside the colored wine, of a dark-red hue, the color of blood.

After each dish they made a "hole," the true "Norman hole," with a drink of whiskey which put fire in their bodies and folly in their heads.

From time to time a guest, full as a cask, left the table and went out to the nearest trees; presently came back with a fresh hunger.

The women, scarlet, oppressed, their stays stretched like balloons, cut in two by the corset, swollen above and below, remained at table through pudency. But one of them, having been forced to make a break, all rose and followed her. They returned more joyous, ready to laugh. And the heavy pleasantries commenced. Across the table coarse jokes were exchanged, all bearing on the nuptial night. The arsenal of the peasant mind was emptied. During a hundred years the same obscenities have served for the same occasions, and although everybody knew them, they still carried, moving the two long lines of guests to uproarious laughter.

A gray-haired old man called out: "All aboard, travelers for Mézidon!"—which elicited screams and howls of mirth.

At the far end of the board four young men were plotting some pranks on the bridal pair, and they seemed to have hit upon a choice one from the fervid way they stamped amid their whispered parley.

One of these, suddenly availing himself of a calm moment, cried out:

"The poachers will make a fine haul to-night, with such a moon! I say, Jean, it's not the moon that you'll be watching for, eh?"

The bridegroom turned sharply. "Let the poachers try it on, if they dare."

But the other laughed coarsely. "Ah! they'll come all right; you'll never quit your fun for that!"

The whole table was swept by the roar that followed; the floor trembled and the glasses vibrated in the tempest of mirth.

But the husband became furious at the idea that anybody was going to profit by his wedding in order to poach on his land. And he rejoined grimly: "I say to you only this:—let them try it on!"

Then followed a rain of jokes of double meaning, which caused the bride to blush, all trembling with expectation as she was.

Finally, when all had drunk their fill of whiskey, the company broke up for the night, and the newly wedded pair retired to their chamber, which was on the ground floor, like all the farmhouse bedrooms. As the night was still quite warm, they opened the window and closed the shutter. A small lamp, given by the bride's father, burned on the dresser, and the bed was ready to receive the new couple, who were less ceremonious in their first embraces than the bourgeois of the cities.

Already the young woman had taken down her hair and undressed to her petticoat; she was now unlacing her boots, while Jean, finishing a cigar, watched her from a corner.

He watched her with a shining eye, more sensual than tender, for he desired her more than he loved her; and suddenly, with a brusque movement, like a man who has work to do, he threw off his coat.

She had undone her shoes and now she was withdrawing her stockings; then she said in the familiar tone she had used with him from childhood: "Go and hide

down there behind the curtains until I get into bed."

He made a face as if to refuse; then he did as she bade him, with a crafty air, and hid himself, keeping his head in view, however. She laughed, declared she would blindfold him, and they played in a gay and amorous fashion, without assumed modesty and without constraint.

To make an end he yielded; then in a second she untied her last petticoat, which fell around her feet and lay in a hoop on the floor. She left it there, leaped out of it, nude under her floating chemise, and slipped into the bed, the springs of which sank under her weight.

At once he arrived, shoeless himself and in pantaloons, and he bent over his wife, seeking her lips, which she was hiding in the pillow, when a gun shot sounded far off, toward the wood of Rapées, it seemed to him. Startled, he rose up with anxious heart and running to the window, flung wide the shutter.

The full moon poured a yellow light over the court; the apple trees cast sombre shadows at their feet; and in the distance the open country shone, covered with ripe harvests.

As Jean leaned outside the window, spying all the rumors of the night, two soft, nude arms came and twined about his neck, and his wife, drawing him backward, murmured: "Let it go—what does it matter?—Come to bed!"

He turned round, seized her, strained her to him, embracing her closely under the thin robe; then, lifting her bodily in his strong arms, he carried her toward their couch. At the very instant he was placing her on the bed, a new detonation, but much nearer this time, resounded.

Then Jean, shaken with a fierce anger, swore: "By God! they believe I won't go-out, on account of you. . . . Wait, wait!" . . . He slipped on his shoes, unhooked his gun that always hung within reach of his hand, and as his wife dragged herself at his knees, desperately imploring him to remain, he freed himself quickly, ran to the window and leaped into the yard.

She waited an hour, two hours, until daylight. Her husband did not return. Then she lost her head, gave the alarm, told of Jean's fury and his chase after the poachers.

At once the farm-hands, the drivers and the lads started out to hunt for the master. They found him two leagues from the house, bound hand and foot to a tree, half-dead with rage, his gun twisted, his breeches on wrong-side, with three killed hares around his neck and a placard on his breast reading—

"Who goes to the chase
Shall forfeit his place."

And later, when Jean was relating the adventures of this nuptial night, he would say: "Oh, for a joke, it was a good joke all right! They took me in a snare like a rabbit, the scoundrels, and they covered my head with a sack. But if I get the scent of them one of these days, let them look out!" . . .

Such are the pranks with which the people amuse themselves on wedding days in old Normandy.

THE ADOPTION

(Aux Champs)

Side by side stood the two poor cottages, at the foot of a low hill, not far from a little seaside resort. The two peasants labored desperately on the barren land in order to bring up their families, each household having four children. Before the two neighboring doors all the young ones swarmed, played and fought from morning till night. The two eldest were six years old, and the two youngest about fifteen months: the marriages and then the births had taken place almost simultaneously in both households.

Hardly could the two mothers distinguish their own progeny in the heap of brats; and the two fathers were often confounded entirely. The eight names danced in their heads, were constantly mixed up and confused; and when they wanted to call one child, the men often called three names before getting the right one.

The first of the two hovels, as you come from the watering place of Rolleport, was occupied by the Tuvaches, who had three sons and a daughter; the other sheltered the Vallins, who had a son and three daughters.

Both families subsisted poorly and painfully on soup, potatoes, and especially the fresh air. At seven o'clock

each morning, at noon, and at six in the evening, the mothers gathered their young ones for the meal, as the keepers of geese assemble their flock. The children were seated, according to age, before a wooden table varnished by a half-century of use. The last urchin could hardly lift his mouth to the level of the table. Before them was placed a large bowl full of bread softened in water in which the potatoes had been cooked, half a cabbage and three onions; and all the line ate until their hunger was appeased. The mother herself fed the littlest one. A bit of meat in the stew on Sundays was a grand feast for all; and on that day the father would linger long over his dinner, often repeating: "I should like to fare as well every day."

One afternoon in August a light carriage stopped suddenly in front of the two cottages, and a young woman, who was driving, herself, said to the gentleman seated beside her:

"Oh, look, Henri, what a swarm of children! Are they not too sweet like that, playing in the dust?"

The gentleman did not answer, accustomed, no doubt, to these bursts of admiration, which were a grief and almost a reproach to him.

The young woman went on:

"I really must hug them! Oh, how I should love to have one of them— that darling there, the littlest one."

Jumping from the carriage she ran to the children, caught one of the two last, a Tuvache, and, lifting him up in her arms, she kissed the child passionately on his dirty cheeks, on his yellow hair tousled and anointed with

dirt, on his little hands, which he agitated wildly in order to free himself from her annoying caresses.

Then she climbed into her carriage and drove off rapidly. But she came back the following week, sat herself down on the ground, took the brat in her arms, stuffed him with sweetmeats, gave bonbons to all the others, and played with them like a madcap while her husband waited patiently in the carriage.

Again she returned, made acquaintance with the parents, reappeared every day, her pockets loaded with candies and pennies.

She called herself Madame Henri d'Hubières.

One morning, on arriving as usual, the husband got out of the carriage with her; and without stopping among the children, who knew her well now, she went straight into the house of the Tuvaches.

The parents were there, about to split wood and prepare the supper: very much surprised, they straightened up, offered chairs to the strangers, and sat down, waiting to hear the object of this visit. Then the young woman commenced to speak in an agitated, faltering voice:

"My good people, I have come to see you because I would like very much . . . indeed, I would like very much to take away with me your . . . your little boy."

The peasants, stupefied by this proposition, and unable to think at first, from surprise, made no answer.

She regained her breath and continued:

"We have no children; we are alone, my husband and I. . . . We would keep the child . . . are you willing to let us have him?"

The peasant woman began to understand. She demanded:

"You want to take our Charlot? Ah, no, for sure, you shall not!"

Then Monsieur d'Hubières, interposed:

"My wife has not explained herself very well. We wish to adopt the child, but he shall return to see you. If he turns out well, as there is every reason to believe he will, he shall be our heir. If, by chance, we should have other children, he would share equally with them. On the other hand, if he should not respond to our cares and expectations, we would settle upon him, at his coming of age, a sum of twenty thousand francs, which will be immediately deposited in his name with a notary. And, as we have also thought of his parents, we agree to pay you during the term of your lives the sum of one hundred francs a month. Do you understand all this clearly?"

The farmer's wife rose in a fury:

"You want us to sell our Charlot? Ah, no!—that is not a thing to ask of a mother, that. I say no!—it would be an abomination."

The man, looking grave and thoughtful, said not a word, but he approved his wife's decision with a continuous nodding of the head.

Madame d'Hubières, in despair, began to weep, and, turning toward her husband, with a voice full of sobs, the voice of a spoiled child whose every desire is gratified, she cried brokenly:

"They are not willing, Henri, they are not willing!"

Then they made a last attempt to win over the peasants.

"But, my friends, think of your child's future, of his happiness, of——"

The peasant woman, exasperated, broke in upon him:

"We see it all, we understand it all, and we have made up our mind. Go away now, and I hope we shall never again see either of you around here. It's a crime to wish to take a child like that!"

Then Madame d'Hubières going out, happened to bethink herself that there were *two* very little urchins, and she asked through her tears, with the persistence of a headstrong, spoiled woman who cannot bear to be denied anything:—

"But the other little fellow is not yours, is he?"

Father Tuvache put in at this:

"No, he belongs to the neighbors; you can go to see them if you like." And he turned back into the house, which resounded with the shrill complaints of his wife.

The Vallins, husband and wife, were at table, about to begin operations on some slices of bread on a plate between them; before eating they rubbed the bread parsimoniously with a very little butter picked at the end of a fork.

Madame d'Hubières again set forth her proposition, but with more address and insinuation this time; also with more cunning and oratorical precaution.

The two rustics at first shook their head in token of denial; but when they learned that they would have a hundred francs each month for themselves, they began to reconsider the matter, consulting each other with fur-

tive looks, very much shaken. They were silent a long time, in a state of painful hesitancy and doubt. Finally the wife demanded:

"Well, what do you say to this, my man?"

He replied in a sententious tone:

"I say it is not to be despised."

Then Madame d'Hubières, who was trembling with anguish and fear of another refusal, spoke of the future of the little one, of his happiness, and of all the money he would be able to give them later on.

The farmer demanded:

"This pension of twelve hundred francs, will it be promised before the notary?"

Madame d'Hubières replied: "Yes, certainly, and it shall begin to-morrow."

The farmer's wife, who had been meditating, here broke in:

"A hundred francs a month is not enough to deprive us of the little one; he would be working in a few years, this child. I say we ought to have fifteen hundred francs."

Madame d'Hubières, who was fidgeting with impatience, granted this demand at once; and as she wished to take the child then and there, she gave a hundred francs to the parents as a gift, while her husband drew up a contract in writing. The mayor and a neighbor were called in at this point, and obligingly acted as witnesses.

At last the young woman, radiant with triumph, carried off the screaming child, as one seizes a passionately desired bibelot at an auction.

The Tuvaches, from their door, witnessed this final

scene of the negotiations; they were silent, severe, perhaps regretting their refusal.

There was no more talk heard about little Jean Vallin. Each month his parents went to draw their hundred and fifty francs at the notary's; and they were angry with their neighbors because Mother Tuvache pursued them with insults, constantly repeating from door to door that folks must be unnatural to sell their child—that it was a horror, a dirty thing, a corruption!

Sometimes she caught up her Charlot in her arms, proudly and defiantly, crying to him as if the child could understand:

"I did not sell *you*, not I; I did not sell *my* little one. I do not sell my children—no, no! I am not rich, but I do not sell my children."

During years and years that followed there were thus every day some insulting allusions vociferated at open door or window so as to reach the neighboring house. Mother Tuvache had finished by believing herself superior in virtue to all the country because she had not sold Charlot. And people, happening to speak of her, would say:

"I know it was a very tempting chance for poor folks, but all the same she acted like a good mother."

She was cited for this heroic virtue throughout the district, and Charlot who was now entering upon his nineteenth year, having been brought up in this idea, which was constantly dinned into him, judged himself better than his comrades because his parents had not sold him!

Meantime the Vallins lived at their ease, thanks to the pension; the unappeasable wrath of the Tuvaches, who had remained poor and miserable, arose from this fact. Their eldest son went away to serve his term as a soldier. The second died; and Charlot was left alone to labor with the old father, in support of his mother and two young sisters. He was just touching twenty-one, when one morning a showy carriage stopped before the two cottages. A young gentleman wearing a gold watch and chain, alighted, giving his hand to an old white-haired lady. The old lady said to him:

"It is there, my child, at the second house."

And as if he found himself at home there, he walked straight into the Vallins' cottage.

The old woman was washing her aprons; the old man, now infirm, was dozing near the hearth. Both looked up at his entrance, and the young man said:

"Good day, Papa; good day, Mamma." They rose up, frightened. The peasant woman, in her emotion, dropped the soap into the water, and she stammered: "Oh, is it you, my child? Is it you, my child?"

He took her in his arms and hugged her, repeating:

"Good day, Mamma." While the old man, all a-tremble, said in the calm tone which he never lost: "Ah, here you are back again, Jean!" As if he had seen the young man a few months before.

When they had made an end of greetings and had fully recognized each other, the parents wished to take their son out at once, in order to show him off amongst the neighbors. Accordingly they conducted him proudly to

the mayor's house, then to the deputy mayor, to the priest and to the schoolmaster.

Charlot, standing in the doorway of his cottage, saw the fortunate prodigal go by. That evening, at the supper table, he said to the old woman:

"You must have been stupid to let those rich people take the Vallins' boy."

His mother replied obstinately:

"We did not wish to sell our child!"

Father Tuvache said nothing. And the son cried out:

"Is it not unfortunate to be sacrificed like that?"

Then the old man exclaimed in an angry tone:

"Are you going to blame us for having kept you?"

The son came back brutally:

"Yes, I blame it to you, because you are only fools. Such parents as you make the misfortune of children. You deserve that I should quit you."

The good woman was weeping in her plate. She moaned all the time while swallowing some spoonfuls of soup, the half of which she spilled:

"But you can kill yourself to bring up your children!"

Then the young man said rudely:

"I would rather not have been born than to be what I am. When I saw that fellow this afternoon, my heart almost stopped. I said to myself: Look what you might be now!"

He rose from his chair.

"See here! I know well that I would do better to go away because if I stay I shall be throwing this thing up to you from morning till night, and making your life mis-

erable. And I'm never going to be able to forgive you, never!"

The old couple said not a word, but listened in grief and stupefaction.

He went on:

"No, the idea of staying here would be too hard. I would far rather go away and seek my living elsewhere."

He opened the door. A noise of voices entered. The Vallins were celebrating with the son who had returned.

Then Charlot, stamping his foot, turned toward his parents, and cried:

"Wretches, I am done with you!"

And he flung away into the night.

THE WOLF

The old Marquis d'Arville told us the following story toward the end of a St. Hubert's dinner at the château of the Baron des Ravels.

During the day we had brought down a deer. The Marquis was the only one of the guests who took no part in the chase, for he never hunted.

Throughout the grand dinner we had talked of little save the killing of animals. Even the women were interested in bloody and often incredible adventures, while the narrators mimicked the attacks and the combats of men against beasts, raised their arms and cried in thrilling tones.

Monsieur d'Arville spoke well, in a certain high-flown, poetical manner, but very effective. He must have often repeated this story, for he told it fluently, never hesitating over words chosen with skill to express an image.

Gentlemen, I have never hunted, nor my father, nor my grandfather, nor my great-grandfather. This last was the son of a man who hunted more than all of you. He died in 1764. I shall tell you how.

He was named Jean, he was married and the father of that child who became my great-grandfather; and he lived with his younger brother François d'Arville at our château in Lorraine, in the heart of the forest.

François d'Arville had remained a bachelor for love of the chase. Both brothers hunted from year's end to year's end without rest, without intermission, without weariness. They loved only that, they understood nothing else, they talked only of that, they lived only for that. They had at heart this terrible, inexorable passion. It was burning them up, being possessed of them absolutely, leaving no room for aught else.

They had given orders that they were not to be disturbed while hunting, for any reason. My great-grandfather was born while his father was chasing a fox, and Jean d'Arville did not interrupt his course, but he swore, "By St. Hubert, the rascal might better have awaited the death!"

His brother François showed himself still more infatuated. On rising, he went at once to see the dogs, then the horses, and then he shot birds around the château until the moment came for starting to hunt bigger game.

They were called in the country, Monsieur the Marquis and Monsieur the Cadet (younger), the nobles of that day not acting like the mushroom aristocrats of our time who wish to establish in titles a descending hierarchy; for the son of a marquis is no more a count nor the son of a viscount a baron, than the son of a general is born colonel. But the wretched vanity of the day finds profit in this arrangement.

I return to my ancestors.

They were, it seems, uncommonly large, bony, hairy, violent and vigorous. The younger, taller still than the elder, had a voice so strong that, according to a legend of which he was proud, all the leaves of the forest trem-

bled when he shouted. And when both swung into the saddle in order to start for the chase, it must have been a grand spectacle to see those two giants bestriding their great horses. . . .

Now toward mid-winter of this year 1764, the cold was excessive, and the wolves became ferocious. They even attacked belated peasants, prowled about houses all night, howled from sunset until dawn, and emptied the stables.

And presently a rumor circulated. People spoke of an immense wolf, gray, almost white, of color, that had eaten two children, torn off a woman's arm, killed half the watch-dogs in the country, and boldly entered farm-yards in order to go sniff under doors. All the peasants swore that they had heard his breathing, which almost put out the candle! And soon a panic ran throughout the entire province. Nobody dared go out after night-fall. The shadows seemed to be haunted by the image of this terrible beast. . . .

The brothers d'Arville resolved to find and kill him, and they invited all the gentlemen of the country to a grand hunt.

It was in vain. To no purpose did they beat the forest and search the thickets: they never encountered him. They killed wolves, but not that one. And each night following the chase, the animal, as if to avenge himself, attacked some traveler or devoured some live-stock, always far from the place where they had sought him.

One night at length he penetrated into the pig-house at the château d'Arville, and ate the two finest of the litter. The two brothers were inflamed with rage, considering

this attack as a bravado of the monster—a direct insult—a defiance. They took their strong bloodhounds, accustomed to hunt the fiercest beasts, and they set out for the chase anew, their hearts swollen with fury.

From dawn until the hour when the ruddy sun descended behind the great leafless trees, they beat the thickets without finding anything.

Furious and disconsolate, finally they were both returning from the fruitless chase, walking their horses along a path bordered with brushwood; and astonished at their skill deceived by this wolf, they were suddenly seized by a kind of mysterious fear.

The elder said: "This beast is not ordinary. You would say that it thinks like a man." The younger replied, "Perhaps we ought to have a bullet blessed by our cousin the Bishop, or get some priest to say the proper words."

Then they were silent again. Jean resumed presently, "Look how red the sun is!—The big wolf is going to do some mischief this night." Hardly were the words out of his mouth when his horse reared, while the animal ridden by François began to kick. A large thicket covered with dead leaves, opened before them, and a colossal beast, all gray, rose and took to flight through the woods.

Both men uttered a kind of joyous groan, and bending down over the necks of their horses, they threw them forward with such an impulse of their bodies, exciting them, dragging them, maddening them with voice, gesture and spur, that the strong riders seemed to carry the heavy animals between their thighs and to raise them as if they were flying.

So they were going at head-long speed, smashing through the thickets, cutting across the ravines, climbing the hills, descending the valleys, and sounding the horn with all the power of their lungs in order to call their people and dogs to the chase.

And behold, suddenly in this desperate pursuit, my ancestor struck his forehead against an enormous branch, splitting his skull; and he fell stiff dead to the ground, while the frightened horse ran away, disappearing in the shadows that enveloped the woods.

The younger d'Arville stopped short, leaped to earth, seized his brother with both arms, and saw that the brains were flowing with the blood from his wound. Then he sat down near the body, took upon his knees the bloody, disfigured head, and waited, while contemplating the impassive face of the elder. Little by little a fear invaded him—a singular fear which he had never felt before, the fear of darkness, the fear of solitude, the fear of the deserted wood, and the fear also of the fantastic wolf that had just killed his brother in order to avenge himself.

The shadows grew thicker; the piercing cold made the trees crack. François arose, shivering, unable to remain there longer, feeling himself ready almost to swoon. He could hear nothing now, neither the voice of the dogs nor the sound of the horns: all was silent around the invisible horizon; and this mournful silence in the freezing night had something terrifying and strange.

He seized in his giant hands the immense corpse of his brother, lifted it up and threw it across the saddle, in order to bring it back to the château. Then he resumed

his march slowly, his mind troubled as if he was drunk; pursued by horrible and surprising images.

Suddenly, in the path on which the night was falling, a great, gray shadow passed. It was the beast! A shock of terror agitated the hunter; something cold, like a drop of water, slipped along his spine, and as does a monk, haunted by the devil, he made a large sign of the cross, distracted at this brusque return of the frightful wanderer. But his glance happened to fall again on the inert form lying before him, and suddenly passing in an instant from fear to anger, he trembled with an uncontrollable rage.

Then he put spurs to his horse and dashed forward in pursuit of the wolf.

He followed him through the copses, the ravines and the forests, traversing woods which he failed to recognize, his eye fixed on the white stain that fled before him in the night now fully fallen upon the earth. His horse also seemed animated with a strength and ardor theretofore unknown. He was galloping with neck stretched on a straight-away course, beating against rocks and trees the head of the dead man thrown across the saddle. The briars tore his hair; the head striking against enormous tree trunks, bespattered them with blood; the dead man's spurs tore the bark from the trees in ribbons.

Suddenly the animal and his pursuer left the forest and rushed into a small valley, as the moon appeared above the hills. This valley was stony, shut in by great rocks, without possible issue; and here the wolf turned at bay.

François then gave a joyous yell, which the echoes repeated like the rolling of thunder, and he leaped from his horse, cutlass in hand.

The beast, with hair erect and back rounded, awaited him, his eyes shining like two stars. But before giving battle, the strong hunter seizing his brother, set him upon a rock, and propping with stones that head which was now only a bloody smudge, he shouted in his ear as if he had spoken to a deaf man, "Look, Jean, look here!" Then he hurled himself upon the monster.

He felt himself strong enough to overthrow a mountain, to break stones with his naked hands. The beast tried to bite him, seeking to tear out his entrails; but François had gripped him by the neck, without even using his weapon, and he was strangling him softly, listening to his breathing as it failed, and to the last beatings of his heart. And he was laughing, madly hilarious, tightening more and more his terrible embrace, crying in a delirium of joy,—"Look, Jean, look!" . . .

All resistance ceased; the body of the wolf became limp. He was dead.

Then François placed upon the saddle the two corpses, one over the other, and he started for home again.

He re-entered the château laughing and weeping like Gargantua at the birth of Pantagruel, uttering cries of triumph and dancing with joy while describing the death of the wolf, and moaning and tearing his beard while telling that of his brother. And often, later, when he recalled this day, he would say with tears in his eyes: "If only that poor Jean could have seen me strangle the beast, he would have died happy, I'm sure! . . ."

My ancestor's widow inspired in her orphan son a horror of the chase, which was transmitted from father to son unto me.

The Marquis d'Arville ended. Someone asked: "That story is a legend, is it not?"

The narrator answered: "I swear to you that it is true, from beginning to end."

Then a woman said in a sweet, low voice, "Ah, what matters that?—but it is grand to have such passions!"

THE CHAIR-MENDER

It was at the end of a dinner given to celebrate the opening of the hunting season, at the country house of the Marquis de Bertrans. Eleven huntsmen, eight young women and the doctor of the place sat around the large table brilliantly lighted and covered with fruits and flowers.

They began to speak of love, and a lively discussion arose, the eternal discussion as to whether one is able to love truly once or several times. They cited examples of persons having had but one serious passion; they cited other examples of persons having loved often and violently. The men, generally, contended that love, like disease, can strike the same being several times, and strike him hard enough to kill if his desire should be crossed. Although this way of looking at the matter may be just enough, the women, whose opinion was founded on poetry rather than experience, affirmed that love, true love, the great passion, can fall but once upon a mortal; that it is like the thunderbolt, and that a heart touched by it remains forever afterward so ravaged, emptied, burned out, that no other powerful sentiment, no dream even, can germinate there again.

The Marquis, having loved very much, disputed this belief with much force. "I tell you," he said, "that one

can love often with all his strength and with all his soul. You cite to me some people who were killed by love. as a proof of the impossibility of a second passion. I answer you that if they had not stupidly destroyed themselves—which removed from them the possibility of a relapse—they would have been cured; and they would have loved again, and ever again, until their natural death. It is with lovers as with drunkards. Who has drunk will drink—who has loved will love. It is purely an affair of temperament."

They chose the doctor as arbitrator—an old Parisian during many years resident in the country—and they begged him to give his opinion. But he had none.

"As the Marquis says, it is an affair of temperament For myself, I have known of a passion which lasted fifty-five years, without a day of respite, and which was ended only by death."

The Marquise clapped her hands. "Isn't that beautiful? And what a dream to be loved so! What happiness to live fifty-five years enveloped in this desperate, penetrating affection! How happy he should be, and how he should thank his lucky stars, who found himself adored in such a manner!"

The doctor smiled. "In truth, Madame, you are right on this point—that the beloved person was a man. You know him—it is Monsieur Chouquet, the village pharmacist. As to the woman, you have often seen her—the old chair-mender who used to come every year to the château. But let me tell you the whole story."

The enthusiasm of the women had suddenly fallen, and their disgusted expression seemed to say "Pugh!"—as if

love were bound to strike only refined and distinguished beings, alone worthy of the interest of such as they, people of wealth and position.

The doctor resumed: "I was called three months ago to the death-bed of this old woman. She had arrived the night before in the sort of covered van which served her as a house, drawn by the old hack that you have seen and accompanied by her two immense black dogs, her friends and guardians. The priest was already with her. She made us her executors and, in order to explain her last wishes, she told us the story of her life. I know nothing more singular and more poignant.

"Her father and mother, like herself, were chair-menders. She had never had a shelter planted in the earth. When very little she wandered, ragged and dirty, with her parents. This was their manner of life: from time to time they stopped at the entrance to a village, alongside the road; the horse browsed, the dog slept on his paws and the little one rolled in the grass, while papa and mamma mended the old chairs of the commune, in the shadow of the elms. They did not talk much in this moving house. After the few words necessary to decide who should make the round of the houses, crying the well known, "Chairs to mend!—Chairs to mend!'—they set themselves to twist and weave the straw, face to face or side by side. When the child was going too far away or was trying to play with some urchin of the village, her father's angry voice recalled her: 'Are you coming back here, brat?' These were the only words of tenderness she ever heard.

"When she had grown larger her parents sent her to

gather worn-out chair bottoms in the villages. Then she sketched some acquaintance from place to place with the gamins, but now it was the parents of her new friends who harshly recalled their children: 'Come straight back here, busybody! How dare you stop there, talking with a ragamuffin?'

"Often the children threw stones at her.

"Some ladies having given her some pennies, she kept them carefully.

"One day—she was then eleven years old—as she was passing through this place she saw young Chouquet behind the cemetery, crying because a playmate had stolen a penny from him. These tears from a little bourgeois—from one of those children whom the poor homeless child in her frail noddle imagined to be always happy and satisfied—fairly overwhelmed her. She went up to him and, finding out the cause of his sorrow, she poured into his hands all her savings, seven sous, which he took naturally while drying his tears. Then, wild with joy, she had the audacity to kiss him. As he was studying his money attentively, he offered no objection. Seeing herself neither repulsed nor beaten, she recommenced; she embraced him to her heart's content. Then she ran away.

"What happened in that miserable head? Did she attach herself to this boy because she had sacrificed to him her little vagabond fortune, or because she had given him her first love-kiss? The mystery of love is the same both for the young and the mature.

"During months she dreamed of this corner of the cemetery and of this gamin. In the hope of seeing him again she robbed her parents, hooking a sou here, a sou there,

on a chair-mending or on provisions that she was sent to buy.

"When she returned she had two francs in her pocket, but she could only see the little pharmacist, very spruce, through the windows of the paternal drug-shop, between a flaring red bottle and a tape worm. She loved him all the more for this, ravished and delighted by the glory of colored water, the splendor of shining crystals.

"She kept an ineffaceable memory of him, and when she met him, the year following, behind the school, playing marbles with his comrades, she flung herself upon him, seized him in her arms and kissed him with such violence that he started to yell with fear. Then, to appease him, she gave him her money, almost four francs this time, a real treasure, which he stared at in wide-eyed wonder. He took it and let her caress him as much as she pleased.

"During four years more she poured into his hands all her savings, which he pocketed with a good conscience, in exchange for kisses endured and granted. It was one time three francs, another time two francs, still another only twelve sous (she wept with sorrow and humiliation, but the year had been bad); and the last time a whole five-franc piece, a big round coin, which made him laugh with pleasure.

"She thought no more but of him, and he awaited her return with a certain impatience, and ran to meet her when he saw her coming, which caused the girl's heart to beat with a strange joy.

"Then he disappeared: they had sent him to college. She learned this by skilful questioning. She began to use

an infinite diplomacy in order to change her parents itinerary, so they would pass through here during the vacation. She succeeded, but it took a year of stratagems. She had not then seen him for two years, and she scarcely recognized him, so much had he changed, grown and improved, and so imposing he seemed in his coat with gold buttons. He pretended not to see her and passed proudly by her. She wept during two days, and since that time she suffered constantly.

Every year she returned; passed before him without daring to salute him and without his deigning even to throw a glance on her. She loved him madly. She said to me, 'He is the only man I have seen on earth, doctor: I do not know whether others exist.'

"Her parents died. She continued her trade, but she kept two dogs now instead of one, two terrible dogs that no one would have dared to brave.

"One day while driving through this village where her heart had remained, she saw a young woman leaving Chouquet's shop on the arm of her well-beloved. It was his wife: he was married.

"That very night she threw herself into the pond which is in the City Hall square. A belated drunkard picked her out and carried her to the pharmacy. Young Chouquet came down in a dressing robe to attend her, and, without appearing to recognize her, he removed her saturated clothing, restored her to consciousness and said to her in a hard voice: 'You are mad! How could you do such a stupid thing?'

"That sufficed to cure her. He had spoken to her! She was happy for a long time.

"And all her life thus flowed away. She mended her chairs, thinking of Chouquet. Every year she saw him behind his windows. She bought at his shop small supplies of medicine. Thus she was able to see him and speak to him and still give him some money.

"As I have told you, she died this spring. After having related to me all this sad history, she begged me to deliver to him, whom she had so patiently loved, all the savings of her life; for she had worked only for him, she said, even fasting that she might put something aside and be assured that he would think of her at least once when she was gone. She then gave me two thousand three hundred and twenty-seven francs. I left the twenty-seven francs with the priest for the burial, and I carried away the rest when she had breathed her last sigh.

"The next morning I called on the Chouquets. They were finishing breakfast, sitting opposite each other; fat and red-faced both, important and satisfied, with an odor of drugs about them.

"As soon as he understood that he had been loved by this vagabond, this chair-mender, this roadster, Chouquet bounded with rage as if she had stolen his good name, the esteem of worthy people, his intimate honor, something dearer to him than life. His wife, as exasperated as he, kept repeating, 'That beggar! that beggar!' As if she could find nothing else to say.

"Chouquet rose and strode up and down behind the table, his cap upset over one ear. He exclaimed: 'Do you understand this affair, doctor? It's a horrible thing for a man. But what can I do? Oh, if I had only known it during her life, I would have had her put under lock

and key. And she would have stayed there, I'll guarantee that!'

"I was fairly stupefied at the outcome of my pious proceeding. I knew not what to say or do. But I had to complete my mission. I rejoined. 'She charged me to deliver to you her savings which amount to two thousand three hundred francs. Now since what I have told you seems to be very disagreeable to you, perhaps the best thing would be to give this money to the poor.'

"They stared at me, this worthy couple, stricken with astonishment.

"I took the money from my pocket, the miserable money, of all places and of all denominations, gold and copper mingled. Then I demanded, 'What do you decide?'

"Madame Chouquet first recovered herself: 'But since it was this woman's last wish, it seems to me that it is not easy for us to refuse.'

"The husband, vaguely embarrassed, put in: 'We could buy something with that for our children.'

"I said dryly: 'As you please.'

"He rejoined, 'Give it to us then since you were charged to do so. We shall find means to employ it in some good work.'

"I delivered the money, bowed and took my leave.

"The next day Chouquet called on me and blurted out, without preface, 'She left her wagon here didn't she, this —this woman? What have you done with the wagon?'

" 'Good, take it if you want it '

" 'All right; that suits me, I'll make a hen-house out of it for my poultry yard.'

"He was going away: I recalled him. 'She left also her old horse and her two dogs—do you want them?'

"He stopped, surprised. 'Why, no—what do you suppose I could do with them? Dispose of them as you please.' And he laughed. Then he offered me his hand, which I did not refuse. Why should I? In the country the doctor and the pharmacist cannot afford to be enemies.

"I have kept the dogs. The priest took the old horse. The van serves as a hen-house for Chouquet; and he bought five shares of railroad stock with the money.

"That is the single profound love that I have encountered in my life."

The doctor ended. Then the Marquise, with tears in her eyes, exclaimed, "Ah, truly, it is only women who know how to love!"

MOONLIGHT

THE Abbé Marignan bore worthily his martial name. He was a tall, thin priest, fanatical, with a soul always exalted but just. All his beliefs were fixed, with never a doubt or wavering. He imagined sincerely that he knew his God, that he was able to penetrate His designs, His wishes, His intentions.

When he promenaded with great strides in the alley of his little country presbytery, sometimes a question formed itself in his mind: "Why has God done that?" And he sought to know the reason obstinately, taking in his thought the place of God; and almost always he found it. It was not he who would then have murmured in a transport of pious humility, "Lord, Thy designs are impenetrable!" He said to himself, "I am God's servant, I ought to know His reasons for acting and to divine them if I do not know them."

Everything in nature seemed to him created with an absolute and admirable logic: the "Wherefore" and the "Because" always balanced themselves. The dawns were made in order to render joyous the awakenings, the days to ripen the harvests, the rains to water them, the evenings to prepare for slumber, and the somber nights for sleep.

The four seasons corresponded perfectly to all the needs

of agriculture, and never would the slightest suspicion have occurred to the priest that Nature has no intentions and that all that lives has, on the contrary, adapted itself to the hard necessities of epochs, of climates and of matter.

But he hated woman; he hated her unconsciously and he despised her by instinct. Often he repeated the words of Christ: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" And he added, "One would say that God Himself was dissatisfied with this work of His hands!" Woman was indeed to him the child twelve times impure, of whom the poet speaks. She was the temptress who had ruined the first man and who continued always her work of destruction; the feeble, dangerous, mysteriously troubling creature. And even more than her body of perdition he hated her loving soul.

Often he had felt the tenderness of woman attached to himself, and although he knew himself unassailable, he became exasperated at this need of loving which trembles always in their hearts.

God, in this good priest's opinion, had created woman only in order to try man and to prove him. One should approach her only with defensive precautions and the fear one has of snares. She was indeed the perfect image of a snare, with her arms extended and her lips open toward man.

He had no indulgence for the sex, excepting only the *religieuses* or nuns whom their vows rendered inoffensive; but he treated even them harshly, because he felt that there was always living there in the recesses of their chained and humiliated hearts that eternal tenderness which awoke even for him, a priest!

He felt it in their glances, more humid with piety than the regards of the monks, in their ecstasies in which their sex mingled itself, in their transports of love for Christ which angered him because it was the love of woman, carnal love. He felt it, this cursed tenderness, in their very docility and obedience, in the softness of their voices whilst speaking to him, in their lowered eyes, and in their resigned tears when he had answered them rudely.

He shook his soutane always on issuing from the convent doors and went away at a rapid gait as if he were fleeing before a danger.

The Abbé Marignan had a niece who lived with her mother in a small house near the presbytery. He was desperately bent on making a Sister of Charity of her.

She was pretty, light-headed and impertinent. When the abbé rebuked her she laughed; and when he grew vexed she embraced him vehemently, pressing him against her heart, while he sought involuntarily to disengage himself from this embrace, which nevertheless caused him to taste a subtle joy, awakening in him that sensation of paternity that sleeps in every man.

Often he talked to her of God, of *his* God, when marching by her side through the field paths. She scarcely heard him the while she looked at the sky, the grass, the flowers, with a sheer happiness of living that mirrored itself in her eyes. Sometimes she darted forward to catch a butterfly and cried on bringing it back in triumph: "Look, uncle, how pretty it is! I would like to kiss it." And this need of "kissing" something, bees or lilac flowers, disturbed, irritated and angered the good priest, who

found in all this the same ineradicable tenderness which germs eternally in the hearts of women.

Now, one day the sexton's wife, who kept house for the priest, informed him, with much precaution, that his niece had a lover. He was terribly shocked, and he stood silent, almost suffocated with emotion; his face covered with soap, for he was in the act of shaving.

When he had somewhat recovered himself and was able to reflect, he cried: "It is not true—you lie, Mélanie!"

The peasant woman placed her hand on her heart: "God is my judge that I do not lie, Monsieur l'Abbé. I tell you she goes to see him every night as soon as your sister is abed. They meet down by the river. You have only to go there between ten o'clock and midnight."

The Abbé Marignan stopped scratching his chin, and he began to march violently to and fro, as he did always in his hours of grave meditation. When he resumed shaving he cut himself three times between nose and ear.

All that day he was silent; swollen with rage and resentment. To his fury as a priest against this invincible love was added the exasperation of a moral father, a guardian, a shepherd of souls, deceived, robbed, tricked by a child—that egotistical resentment of parents to whom their daughter announces that, without them and in spite of them, she has chosen a husband.

After dining the Abbé Marignan tried to read a little, but he was unable to settle his mind to it; and he became more and more exasperated. When ten o'clock struck he took his cane, a formidable oaken cudgel, which he carried always in his nightly walks when he went to see some

sick parishioner. And he smiled as he surveyed the huge club which he twirled in his solid fist with a menacing whirl. Then suddenly he rose, and, grinding his teeth, brought it down on a chair, splitting the back, which fell to the floor.

He opened the door to go out; but he stopped on the threshold, surprised by such a splendor of moonlight as is rarely seen. And as he was endowed with an exalted mind, a mind such as the Fathers of the Church, those poetical dreamers, must have had, he felt himself suddenly distracted, moved by the grand, serene beauty of the pale night.

In his little garden, all bathed with soft light, his fruit trees, ranged in a row, outlined in shadow across the alley their frail limbs scarcely covered with verdure; while the giant honeysuckle climbing up the wall of his house exhaled a delicious and, as it were, sugared aroma, causing to float in the warm, bright night a kind of perfumed soul.

He began to breathe long, deep breaths, drinking the air as drunkards do wine; and presently he walked away at a slow pace, ravished and wondering,—almost forgetting his niece.

As soon as he was in the open country he stopped to contemplate all the plain inundated with this caressing radiance, drowned in this tender and languishing charm of serene nights. Momentarily the frogs uttered through space their short, metallic note, and some distant nightingales mingled their scattered music, which makes one dream without making one think—their music gay and

vibrant, made for kisses, for the seduction of moonlight.

The priest resumed his march, his heart failing him, without his knowing why. He felt himself enfeebled and as it were, suddenly exhausted; he wished to sit down, to remain there, to contemplate, to admire God in His work.

Down there, following the undulations of the little river, a long line of poplars could be traced in serpentine perspective. A fine mist, a white vapor which the moonrays traversed, silvered and made luminous, hung suspended above and around the trees, enveloping all the tortuous course of the stream with a sort of light and transparent haze.

The Abbé Marignan stopped again, penetrated to the depths of his soul by an increasing, irresistible emotion. And a doubt, a vague disquietude invaded him, while there rose in his mind one of those interrogations which he sometimes proposed to himself.

Why had God made this? Since the night is intended for sleep, for unconsciousness, for repose, for forgetfulness of all, why did He render it more charming than the day, sweeter than the dawns and the evenings? And this slow and seducing star, more poetical than the sun and which seems destined, so discreet is it, to illumine things too delicate and mysterious for the garish light of day—why does it come to make the shadows so transparent?

Why does not the most gifted of singing birds sleep when the others sleep; why does he set himself to sing in the troubling shadow?

Why is this half-veil thrown upon the world? Why those shivers of the heart, this emotion of the soul, this

languishment of the flesh? Why this unfolding of seductions which men do not see, since they are asleep in their beds? For whom was intended this sublime spectacle, this abundance of poesy poured from heaven upon the earth?

The Abbé Marignan did not understand.

But lo! down there, on the border of the prairie, under the vault of trees covered with shining mist, two shadows appeared, marching side by side.

The man was the taller and held the girl embraced about the neck and shoulders; from time to time he kissed her on the forehead. They suddenly animated this motionless landscape, which enveloped them like a divine frame made for them alone. They seemed, these two, like a single being, the being for whom this calm and silent night was destined; and they came towards the priest like a living response—the response which his Master made to his interrogation!

He remained standing, his heart beating rapidly, overwhelmed with emotion; and he believed he saw something biblical, like the love of Ruth and Boaz, the accomplishment of the Lord's will in one of those grand scenes of which the Holy Book tells us. And in his head there began a chanting of the verses of the Song of Songs, the cries of passion, the appeals of the flesh, all the warm poesy of that sublime Poem burning with love.

He said to himself: "Perhaps God has made these nights in order to veil with the ideal the loves of men."

He retreated before this enlaced couple, still marching toward him. It was his niece, notwithstanding; but he asked himself if he had not been on the point of offend-

ing, disobeying God. Does not God permit love, since He surrounds it visibly with such a splendor? . . .

And he fled from the scene, bewildered, almost ashamed, as though he had penetrated into a temple where he had not the right to enter.

THE MINUET

GREAT misfortunes do not sadden me much, said Jean Bridelle, an old bachelor who passed for a skeptic. I have seen war at close hand; I have leaped over dead bodies without emotion or pity. The harsh brutalities of nature or of men can draw from us cries of horror or indignation, but they do not give us that contraction of the heart, that shiver which passes down the spine, at the sight of certain little heart-rending things. The most violent grief we are able to experience, surely, is for a woman the loss of a child, for a man the loss of the mother. That is terrible, crushing, overwhelming; but one recovers from these catastrophes as from large, bleeding wounds. Now certain chance discoveries, certain things half glimpsed, divined, certain secret chagrins, certain perfidies of fate, which move within us a whole dolorous world of thoughts, which suddenly throw ajar before us the mysterious door of moral sufferings, complicated, incurable, the more profound that they seem benign, the keener that they seem almost unseizable, the more tenacious that they seem unreal—these leave in the soul a train of sadness, a taste of bitterness, a sensation of disenchantment, from which we are long in freeing ourselves.

I have always before my eyes two or three things

which others might not have remarked, assuredly, and yet which pierced me like stiletto wounds, deep and incurable.

Perhaps you would not understand the emotion which has remained with me from these rapid impressions. I shall tell you only about one. It is very old, but vivid as of yesterday. Yet it is possible that my sensibility on this score may owe much to my imagination.

I am fifty years old. I was young then and studying law here in Paris. A little sad, a little dreamy, impregnated with a melancholy philosophy, I cared nothing for the noisy cafés, the brawling comrades and the stupid girls. I rose early and one of my dearest pleasures was to promenade alone in the nursery of the Luxembourg.

You have not known this nursery, my friends? It was like a forgotten garden from another age, a garden charming as the sweet smile of an old lady. Tufted hedges separated the narrow and regular alleys, alleys green and calm between two walls of foliage trimmed with exact method. The gardener's huge shears constantly kept these leafy partitions in order; and from place to place you saw parterres of flowers, borders of little shrubs ranged like collegians in promenade, societies of magnificent rose bushes or regiments of fruit trees.

One whole corner of this delightful park was occupied by the bees. Their thatched houses, cunningly spaced on boards, opened to the sun their doors as large as a thimble. And one saw all along the paths the humming, golden bees, true mistresses of this peaceful retreat, true promenaders of these tranquil corridors.

I went there toward eight o'clock almost every morn-

ing. I sat on a bench and read. Sometimes I let the book fall on my lap, in order to dream or to hear Paris living and breathing about me, and to enjoy the infinite repose of these beautiful elms yoked together in the old style.

But I observed presently that I was not alone in frequenting this place from the opening of the gates, for I sometimes encountered face to face, at the turn of a thicket, a strange little old man.

He wore shoes with silver buckles, trousers of antique pattern, a long snuff-colored frock-coat, a piece of lace instead of a cravat, and an outlandish hat with wide brims and long furry nap which made one think of a deluge.

He was extremely thin and meagre, angular, grimacing and smiling. His quick eyes palpitated under a constant agitation of the eyelids: and he carried always a superb gold-headed cane, which looked as if it might be to him a magnificent souvenir.

This good man astonished me at first, then interested me beyond measure. And I watched him through the leafy walls, I followed him at a distance, stopping at a turn of the hedge in order not to be seen.

And behold, one morning when he thought himself safely alone, he started to make some singular movements: some little mincing steps at first, then a curtsy; then he cut a lively caper with his thin leg, then he began to pirouette gallantly, jiggling, bestirring himself in a droll fashion, smiling as if before an audience, bowing, rounding his arms, twisting his poor puppet of a body,

addressing to the vacant air his pitiful and ridiculous salutes. . . . He was dancing!

I stood petrified with astonishment, asking myself which of the two was mad, he or I.

But suddenly he stopped, came forward as do actors on the stage, then bowed low while retiring with gracious smiles and comedian's kisses, which he threw with his trembling hand to the two rows of clipped trees.

And he gravely resumed his promenade.

From that day I never lost sight of him, and each morning he recommenced his incredible exercise.

A wild desire seized me to speak to him. I risked it finally, and having saluted him, said:

"Fine weather to-day, Monsieur."

He bowed. "Yes, Monsieur, it is real old-fashioned weather."

Eight days afterward we were friends and I learned his history. He had been dancing master at the Opera in the time of Louis XV. His beautiful cane was a gift of the Comte de Clermont. And when one spoke to him of dancing there was never an end of his chatter.

Now one day he made me this confidence:

"I married La Castris, Monsieur. I shall present her to you if you wish, but she comes here only in the afternoon. This garden, you see, is our pleasure and our life. It is all that remains to us of the past. It seems to us that we could not live any longer if we did not have it. It is so old and distinguished, is it not? I believe I breathe here an air which has not changed since my youth

My wife and I, we pass here all our afternoons. But I come every morning, for I am an early riser."

Next day, as soon as I had lunched, I returned to the Luxembourg, and very soon I saw my quaint friend giving his arm with great ceremony to a little old woman dressed in black, to whom he presented me. It was La Castris, the famous dancer, loved by the king, loved by the princes, loved by all that gallant age which seems to have left in the world an odor of love.

We sat down, all three, on a bench. It was in the month of May. A perfume of flowers hovered in the trim alleys; the warm sun-rays stole between the leaves, scattering upon us large drops of light. La Castris's black robe seemed all saturated with brightness.

The garden was quite deserted. We heard the hackney coaches rolling in the distance.

"Will you not explain to me," I said to the old dancing master, "what was the minuet?"

He started. "The minuet, Monsieur!—it was the queen of dances and the dance of queens, do you understand? Since the kings are gone we can no longer have the minuet."

And he commenced, in pompous style, a long, dithyrambic eulogium of which I understood nothing. I wished to make him describe the steps, all the movements, the poses of the dance. He became confused, vexing himself by his failure to satisfy me, and at length broke off, nervous and irritated.

Then suddenly turning toward his old companion, always silent and grave, he said:

"Élise, do you wish—say, do you wish—it would be very sweet of you—to show this gentleman how we used to dance the minuet?"

She cast her unquiet eyes on every side, then rose without saying a word, and came to place herself in front of him.

And then I saw a thing never to be forgotten.

They came and went with infantile grimaces, smiling at each other, balancing to each other, bowing to each other, hopping and skipping like two old dolls made to dance by some mechanical contrivance, a little broken, which might have been constructed in ancient days by a skilful workman, according to the manner of his time.

And I looked at them, my heart troubled with extraordinary sensations, my soul filled with an unspeakable melancholy. It seemed as though I saw a comic yet lamentable apparition, the discarded Shadow of an Age! I wished to laugh and I needed to weep. . . . Suddenly they stopped; they had terminated the figures of the dance. During some seconds they remained standing face to face, grimacing in a surprising fashion; then they fell sobbing into each other's arms.

I started three days afterward for the provinces. I never saw them again. When I returned to Paris two years later, the nursery of the Luxembourg was destroyed. What became of them without their dear garden of the past, with its winding paths, its odor of the old time and the gracious detour of its yoke-elms?

Are they dead? Do they wander through modern streets like exiles without hope? Do they dance, poor

grotesque ghosts, a fantastic minuet, beneath the cypresses of a cemetery, along paths bordered with tombs, in the light of the moon?

The memory of them haunts me, tortures me, persists in me like a wound. Why? I know no more than you.

You will think this ridiculous, no doubt?

A VENDETTA

Paolo Saverini's widow lived alone with her son in a poor little house on the ramparts of Bonifacio. The city, built on a spur of the mountain, suspended even in some places above the sea, looks over the narrow strait bristling with rocks, to the still lower coast of Sardinia. At its feet, on the other side, skirting it almost entirely, a cut in the cliff resembling a gigantic corridor, serves the town as a harbor, brings to the first houses after a long circuit between two abrupt walls, the little Italian or Sardinian fishing boats, and once a fortnight the old broken-winded steamboat that carries passengers to and from Ajaccio.

On the white mountain the high-clustering houses place, as it were, a whiter stain. They seem like nests of wild birds fastened to this rock, dominating this terrible passage wherein the ships never venture. The wind incessantly worries the sea, worries the rugged coast which it has whipped almost bare of verdure; it is swallowed up in the whirlpool channel whose two sides it ravages. Scattered trains of pale white foam clinging to the black points of innumerable rocks which always show above the waves, look not unlike shreds of linen floating and palpitating at the surface of the water.

The Widow Saverini's house, soldered to the very edge

of the cliff, opened its three windows on this wild and desolate horizon.

She lived there alone, with her son Antonio and his dog Sémillante, a large, meager bitch with long, rough hair, of the breed of sheep-dogs. Sémillante, on occasion, served the young man as a hunting dog. . . .

One night after a quarrel, Antonio Saverini was killed treacherously with a knife thrust by Nicolas Ravolati, who the same night made good his escape to Sardinia.

When the old mother received her son's body, which the passers-by brought home to her, she did not weep, but she remained silent and motionless a long time looking upon it: then, stretching out her withered hand over the corpse, she pledged to it the vendetta. She wished no one to stay near her, and she shut herself up alone with the corpse and the dog, which was howling always. The beast kept up this howling in a continuous fashion, standing upright at the foot of the bed, with head stretched toward its master and tail pressed between its legs. It moved no more than the mother, who, leaning now over the body, with eye fixed, wept great silent tears while contemplating him.

The young man, lying on his back, wearing his vest of coarse cloth, pierced and torn at the chest, seemed as if asleep; but there was blood everywhere—on his shirt, torn open for the first restoratives, on his vest, on his pantaloons, on his hands. Some clots of blood were fixed in his beard and in his hair.

The mother began to talk to him. At the sound of her voice the dog ceased howling.

"Peace, peace, you shall be avenged, my darling, my

son, my poor child. Sleep, sleep, you shall be avenged, do you hear? 'Tis your mother who promises it! And she keeps her word always, your old mother,—you know it well."

And slowly she bent over him, glueing her cold lips upon the dead mouth.

Then Sémillante resumed her howling. She was now uttering a long monotonous plaint,—tearing, horrible. There they both stayed, the old woman and the dog, until morning.

Antonio Saverini was buried the following day, and presently nobody spoke any more about him in Bonifacio.

He had left neither brother nor near cousins. No man was there to follow up the vendetta. Alone, the mother was thinking of it—the old woman.

She now set herself to watch, on the other side of the strait, from morning till night, a white point on the coast. It is a little Sardinian village called Longosardo, where the Corsican bandits take shelter when pressed too close. Alone, they almost people this hamlet facing the hills of their country; and there they await the moment of returning—of returning to the *maquis*. There in this village, she knew, Nicolas Ravolati had found a refuge.

All alone, through the long day, seated at the window, she kept looking down there, whilst thinking of vengeance. What could she do, without anybody to help her, weak, so near unto death herself? But she had promised—she had vowed the vendetta—she had sworn upon the corpse! She could not forget; she could not wait. What could she do? . . .

That night she slept no more; she had neither rest nor appeasement; she kept searching in her mind obstinately. The dog at her feet was sleeping, but from time to time, raising her head, howled at something in the distance. Often since her master was gone, she howled in this fashion,—as if she had been called, as if her soul of a beast had also kept the memory which nothing effaces.

Now, one night as Sémillante was beginning to bark, Mother Saverini had an idea—the idea of a vindictive and ferocious savage. She meditated it until morning; then, having risen at dawn, she went to church. She prayed, prostrate on the pavement, on her hands and knees before God, begging Him to aid her, to give her poor weak body the strength which she needed in order to avenge her son.

Then she returned to her house. There was in her yard an old dilapidated barrel which collected water from the gutters; she upset this, emptied it and then set it up again solidly, supporting it with stakes and stones; then she chained Sémillante to this kennel, and went into her house.

The dog barked all day and all night. Next morning the old woman gave her some water, but no soup or bread.

Again the day passed. Sémillante, tired out, was sleeping. The following day her eyes were blazing, her hair bristling, and she dragged desperately at her chain.

The old woman still gave her nothing to eat. The beast, now become furious, kept up a constant barking with a raucous voice. The night passed again.

Then at daybreak Mother Saverini went to a neighbor's house and begged two bundles of straw. She took some old clothes which her husband had worn formerly and stuffing them with straw, made a very good scare-

crow. Having planted a stick in the ground in front of Sémillante's kennel, she fastened the manikin to it, which thus seemed to stand erect. Then she figured out a sort of head by means of a package of old linen.

The dog, surprised, kept watching this man of straw, and ceased its barking, although devoured by hunger.

Then the old woman went to buy at the butcher's a long piece of black sausage. Returning to her house, she lighted a wood fire in the yard, near the kennel, and began to fry the meat. Sémillante, frantic, leaped and bounded, foaming at the mouth, her eyes fixed on the cooking meat, the savor of which drove her mad.

The old woman then made of this smoking sausage a sort of cravat for the straw man. She was a long time tying it about the neck, as if to make him swallow it! When this was done she unchained the dog.

With one formidable leap the beast seized the manikin's throat, and her paws on its shoulders, began to tear it into shreds. She fell down, a morsel of the prey in her jaw, then leaped upon it again, burying her teeth in the cords, snatched some pieces of meat, fell again and rebounded with fury. She tore away the face of the dummy with savage bites, leaving the head and neck in tatters.

The old woman, silent and motionless, looked on. Then she chained the dog again, made her fast two days more, and recommenced this strange exercise.

During three months she trained the animal to this kind of struggle, to this meal conquered by her ferocity. Presently she ceased to chain her up, but loosed her with a gesture on the manikin. She taught the dog to tear it, to devour it, without any meat being hidden about its throat;

she would then give the beast, in recompense, the sausage cooked for her.

As soon as she saw the dummy, Sémillante shivered, then turned her eyes toward her mistress who cried "Go!" in a piercing voice, pointing her finger.

When she judged the time come, Mother Saverini went to confession and received communion the next Sunday with an ecstatic fervor. Having dressed herself in male attire, so that she looked like an old ragged beggar, she made a bargain with a Sardinian fisherman to take her and her dog across the strait.

She had in a cloth bag a large piece of sausage. Sémillante had fasted two days. As they went along the old woman kept teasing and exciting the famished animal by letting her smell the savory food.

They entered Longosardo. The old Corsican woman went hobbling away. She stopped at a barber's and asked where she should find Nicolas Ravolati. He had resumed his old trade, as a carpenter. He was working now in the rear of his shop.

The old woman pushed open the door and called him: "Hey, Nicolas!"

He turned; then loosing the dog she cried: "Go! go! —tear him!"

The maddened animal leaped upon his prey and seized him by the throat. The man stretched his arms, clutched the dog and rolled on the floor. During some seconds he writhed there, beating the ground with his feet; then he lay motionless while Sémillante was searching his throat, which she tore into ribbons. . . .

Two neighbors, seated at their doors, recollected perfectly having seen an old beggar leave the carpenter's shop with a lean and hungry dog that was eating, while going along, something black which his master was giving him.

In the evening Mother Saverini returned to her house. She slept well that night.

MOTHER SAUVAGE

(Story of the Franco-Prussian War, 1870-71)

FIFTEEN years had passed since I was at Virelogne. I went back to hunt there last autumn, as the guest of my friend Serval, who had lately rebuilt his château which the Prussians destroyed in the war.

I loved that country beyond words. Are there not some delightful corners of the world which have a sensual charm for the eyes? One loves them with a sort of physical passion. We, the chosen few whom the earth seduces, keep a tender memory of certain springs, certain woods, certain ponds, certain hills, often seen, which have affected us like happy events. At odd times the thought returns to a forest nook or a little bank, or an orchard deep in flower, glimpsed but once on a joyous day, which remains in the heart like those images of women you meet on the street of a spring morning, wearing bright and transparent dresses, and who leave with you an unappeased desire that you never forget, a sensation of happiness almost touched and lost!

At Virelogne I loved all that countryside dotted with little woods and crossed by sparkling streams that run through the land like veins carrying blood to the earth. You had good fishing there, too—crawfish, trout, and eels

—what divine sport! Then you could bathe in certain places, and often you found snipe in the tall grass that grew on the banks of those slender water courses.

I was going along, nimble as a goat, watching my two dogs as they foraged before me. Serval, a hundred yards on my right, was beating a field of lucern. I turned a copse which forms the boundary of the wood of Saudres, and I came upon the charred ruins of a cottage. At once I recalled it as I had seen it the last time, in 1869, neat, vine-covered, with chickens about the door.

What can be more piteous and sad than a dead house, with its skeleton standing upright, dilapidated, ominous?

I remembered also that a good woman had given me a glass of wine in this house, on a very fatiguing day, and that Serval had told me the history of these folk. The father, an old poacher, had been killed by the gendarmes. The son, whom I had formerly seen, a tall, dry youth, also passed for a ruthless destroyer of game. People called them the Sauvages. *

Was this a name or a nickname?

I called Serval, and he came toward me with his long, striding gait, like a crane. I asked him, "What became of these people?"

He replied by telling me the following story.

When the war broke out, Sauvage the son, who was then thirty-three years old, enlisted, leaving his mother alone in the house. People did not pity the old woman over-much, because she had some money; they knew that. So she remained quite alone in this isolated cottage, far

* *Les Sauvage*: a proper name, or used punningly, the Wild Ones.

from the village, on the border of the wood. Moreover, she had no fear, being of the same breed as her men; a strong old woman, tall and wiry, who seldom laughed and with whom people did not make jokes. Indeed, the women of the fields do not laugh very much—that is the men's affair, you see! The soul of the peasant woman is narrow and sad, from her life so melancholy and without vista. Her man may pick up a little noisy gayety at the tavern, but his companion remains mirthless, with an expression constantly severe. In truth, the muscles of her face have not learned the movements of laughter.

Mother Sauvage, then, pursued her ordinary existence at the cottage, which was presently covered by the winter snows. She came to the village once a week to get bread and a little meat; then she returned to her house. As there was some rumor of wolves abroad, she went out carrying a gun on her shoulder—her son's piece it was, rusty, with the butt-end worn by friction of the hand. A weird sight she was, the tall old woman, a little stooped, going with slow strides in the snow, the barrel of the gun passing behind the black cap fitting close to her head and confining her white hair which nobody had ever seen.

One day the Prussian invaders arrived. They were billeted among the people, according to the fortune and resources of each household. Mother Sauvage, who was known to be well-to-do, was allotted four of them.

They were four stout young men, blue-eyed and blond of beard and complexion, who had kept fat and rosy in spite of the privations which they had already endured; they were good kindly fellows, besides, although in a conquered country. Alone with this aged woman, they show-

ed her every kind attention, sparing her, so far as they could, both labor and expense. You might see the four of them making their morning toilet, in shirt-sleeves, about the well; hugely swishing and splashing their pink-and-white Northmen's flesh with the cold water, the while Mother Sauvage came and went preparing breakfast for them. Or one might see them tidying up the kitchen, scrubbing the stone floor, chopping wood, peeling potatoes, washing the linen, in short and in sum, doing all the necessary chores of the house, like four good sons around their mother.

But she, the old woman, was constantly thinking of her own son, of her great big fellow with the hooked nose and the brown eyes and the heavy moustache that made a thick pad of black hair on his lip. Every day she put this question to each of the foreign soldiers installed at her hearth:

"Do you know where the French Marching Regiment, Number 23, has gone? My son belongs to that."

They replied always, in broken French, with their heavy accent: "No, we don't know—don't know at all."

And they who had mothers of their own far away, being quick to understand her care and anxiety, bestirred themselves to render her many little cares and attentions. Besides, she loved them well, these four enemies of hers, for the peasants do not share much in the so-called patriotic hatreds and antipathies—that is a luxury which they are glad to leave to the superior classes. The humble ones, those who pay the most because they are poor and every new burden crushes them; those who are killed in crowds and masses, who make the true cannon-food because they

are the many; in fine, those who suffer most cruelly from the atrocious miseries of war because they are the weakest and the least able to resist- they care little for and understand less of those warlike enthusiasms, that bellicose madness, that excitable point of honor, and those pretended political combinations which exhaust two rival nations in six months—the victor as well as the vanquished!

People of the country roundabout speaking of Mother Sauvage's Germans, would say: "Well, there are four fellows who have found a snug berth."

Now, one morning, the old woman being alone in the house, she saw in the distance a man coming toward her place. Soon she recognized the postman delivering letters on his round. He gave her a folded paper, and she took from a case the spectacles she used for sewing; putting them on, she read as follows:

MADAME SAUVAGE:

This letter will bring you sad news. Your son Victor was killed yesterday by a cannon shot which one might say cut him in two. I was very near, as we marched side by side in the company, and he spoke to me about you, so that I might send you word on the same day if anything happened to him.

I took his watch from his pocket, and will bring it back to you when the war is over.

I salute you very kindly, CÉSAIRE RIVOT,
Soldier of the 2nd Class, Marching Regiment, No. 23.

The letter was dated three weeks back.

She did not weep, at first, but remained rigid, motionless, so stricken and benumbed that she did not even begin to suffer yet. She kept thinking, "There's Victor killed now!" Then slowly the tears rose to her eyes and grief possessed her heart. Thought came to her one by one, frightful, torturing. She would never embrace him again, her child, her big son—no, never more! The gendarmes had killed the father; now the Prussians had killed the son. He had been cut in two by a cannon ball. And it seemed to her that she saw the thing, the horrible thing: the head falling, the eyes open, while he chewed a bit of his heavy moustache, as he always did when angry. What had they done with his body afterward? If only they had brought her child back to her, as they had brought back her husband, with the bullet in the middle of his forehead.

But she heard the sound of voices; it was the Prussians returning from the village. Quickly she hid the letter in her pocket, and having had the time to dry her eyes, received them calmly, with her ordinary expression. They were all laughing, in the highest spirits, for they were bringing home a fine rabbit, which they had poached, beyond doubt; and they made signs to Mother Sauvage that they were going to have something good to eat. She started at once to prepare the mid-day meal, but when it came to killing the rabbit, the old woman's heart failed her. Nevertheless, it was not the first! One of the soldiers killed it with a fist blow behind the ears.

The animal once dead, she set to work to skin it and draw the red body from the pelt; but the sight of the blood

which she was touching and which covered her hands, of the warm blood which she felt grow cold and coagulate, made her tremble from head to foot. And always she saw her big son cut in two halves, and all red also, like the still palpitating animal.

She sat down to table with her Prussians, but she found herself unable to eat; not a mouthful could she swallow. They devoured the rabbit, without troubling themselves about her. Furtively she watched them without speaking, while an idea grew in her mind; yet her face was so impassive that they suspected nothing. Suddenly she broke out: "I don't even know your names, and here we have been a whole month together."

They understood, not without trouble, what she wanted, and they told their names. But that did not satisfy Mother Sauvage: she made them write their names on a sheet of paper, with the address of their families. Adjusting her spectacles on her great nose, she considered this unknown writing; then she folded the leaf and put it in her pocket, with the letter which had brought word of her son's death.

The meal finished she said to the men: "I am going to work for you." And at once she began to carry bundles of hay up to the garret where they slept.

They were astonished at this work; she explained that it was to make them more comfortable, and they lent her a hand. They heaped the sheaves quite up to the thatched roof, and thus they made a sort of large chamber, with four walls of forage, warm and perfumed, where they would sleep like a charm.

At dinner one of the soldiers was disturbed because Mother Sauvage was still unable to eat. She complained of cramps in the stomach. Then she made a good fire to warm herself, and the four Germans climbed to their lodging place by the ladder, which they used every night. As soon as the trap was closed down again, the old woman took away the ladder, then opened noiselessly the outside door, and went to find some bundles of straw, with which she filled the kitchen. She was going barefoot in the snow, so softly that nobody heard a sound. From time to time she listened to the stertorous and unequal snores of the four sleeping soldiers. When she judged her preparations sufficient, she threw on the hearth one of the bundles, and this having taken fire, she scattered it over the others; then she went out of the house, and watched.

In a few seconds a violent light illuminated all the interior of the cottage; then it became a terrible blaze, a gigantic burning furnace whose flame leaped through the narrow window and threw across the snow a blinding streamer.

Now a great cry came from the top of the house, and this was followed by a clamor of human shrieks, with appeals for help heart-rending in their anguish and terror. Then, the trap having burned through, a whirlpool of fire burst into the garret, pierced the straw roof, rose up to heaven like an immense torch; and all the cottage flamed. Nothing now was heard inside the house save the crackling of the fire, the breaking of the walls, the crashing down of the timbers. Suddenly the roof collapsed, and the burning frame of the house seemed to launch high in air,

in the midst of a cloud of smoke, a great plume of sparks.

The white country, illumined by the fire, shone like a cloth-of-silver tinted with red.

In the distance a bell began to toll. Still Mother Sauvage stood erect on guard before the ruined home, armed with her gun—her son's weapon—for fear that one of these men should escape.

When she saw that all was ended, she threw the arm into the fire. A report followed.

Some people were coming now—the peasants, the Prussians.

They found the old woman seated on a tree-stump, tranquil and content.

A German officer who spoke French like a son of France, questioned her:

"Where are your soldiers?"

She stretched her bony arm toward the red heap of the now dying fire, and she answered with a strong voice:

"Inside there!"

They pressed around her. The Prussian demanded:

"How did the house take fire?"

She declared: "I set it on fire myself."

They refused to believe her; they judged that the disaster had suddenly turned her mind. Then as the crowd surrounded and listened to her, she told her story from beginning to end; from the coming of the letter to the last cry of the men burned in the house. Not a single detail did she forget of what she had felt or of what she had done.

When she had finished she took from her pocket two papers, and in order to distinguish them in the last flickerings of the fire, she again put on her spectacles. Showing one paper she said, "There, that's Victor's death;" showing the other, she added, with a nod of her head toward the red ruins, "There, that's their names, so you may write to their people." Calmly she handed the white leaf to the officer who held her by the shoulders, and she ended in a stronger tone:

"You must write how it all happened, and you shall tell their parents that it was I who did this—Victoire Simon, la Sauvage! Do not forget."

The officer shouted some orders in German. She was seized and thrown against the wall, still hot, of her house. Then twelve men drew up quickly in front of her, at twenty paces. Mother Sauvage did not budge. She had understood; she was waiting.

An order rang out, followed almost instantly by a long report. A belated shot was fired all alone, after the others.

The old woman did not fall; she sank down as if the legs had been cut from under her.

The Prussian officer drew near. She was almost cut in two, and in her withered hand she still held her letter, bathed in blood.

My friend Serval added:

It was by way of reprisals that the Germans destroyed the château of the district, which happened to be my property.

But I was thinking of the mothers of those four kind

lads burned inside there; and of the atrocious heroism of this other mother, fusilladed against the wall.

And I picked up a little stone, still blackened from the fire.

A FISHING PARTY

(*Deux Amis*)

PARIS was blockaded, famished, with the death rattle in her throat. * The sparrows made themselves very scarce on the roofs, and even the sewers were being dispeopled of their regular tenants. People were eating—no matter what.

As he was promenading sadly on a bright January morning along the outer boulevard, his hands in the pockets of his uniform and his belly empty, Monsieur Morissot, clock-maker by trade and slipper-maker on occasion, stopped short before a compatriot whom he recognized as a friend. It was Monsieur Sauvage, a fishing acquaintance.

Every Sunday before the war Morissot was in the habit of starting at daybreak, a bamboo pole in one hand and a tin box slung over his shoulder. He took the Argenteuil railroad, got off at Colombes and walked to the island Marante. No sooner had he arrived in this place of his dreams than he began to fish; and he fished until night.

Every Sunday he met there a little plump and jovial man, Monsieur Sauvage, a merchant of Rue Nôtre Dame de Lorette, another enthusiastic fisherman. Often they

* Franco-Prussian War, 1870-71.

passed a half day side by side, with fishing line in hand and feet swinging over the current; and they had taken a great liking to each other.

On certain days they hardly talked at all. Sometimes they chatted, but they understood each other admirably without saying a word, having similar tastes and identical sympathies.

On a fine spring morning toward ten o'clock, when the rejuvenated sun caused to float over the tranquil stream that little mist which flows with the water, Morissot would sometimes say to his neighbor, "Ah! but it's good here!" And Monsieur Sauvage would reply, "I know of nothing better." And that sufficed to their mutual understanding and esteem.

In the autumn, toward the end of the day, when the sky all reddened by the setting sun threw upon the water figures of scarlet clouds, empurpled the whole river, kindled the horizon like a conflagration, made the two friends as red as fire and touched with gold the russet trees already shivering with a breath of winter, Sauvage would look smilingly at Morissot and exclaim, "What a spectacle!" and Morissot, filled with wonder, would reply, without lifting his eyes from his floater, "It's finer than the boulevard, eh, old fellow?"

Now as soon as they had recognized each other they shook hands warmly, affected at meeting again under circumstances so different. M. Sauvage, breathing a sigh, murmured: "Ah, what events there have been!" Morissot, very gloomy, moaned, "And what weather! To-day is the first fine day of the year."

The sky was, indeed, all blue and full of light.

They walked along side by side, dreamy and sad. Morissot remarked, "And the fishing? Ah! what a pleasant memory!" Sauvage demanded, "When shall we return to it?"

They entered a little café and sipped an absinthe together; then they resumed their promenade along the sidewalk.

Morissot stopped suddenly: "Another green, eh?" M. Sauvage consented: "At your pleasure." And they went into another wine-shop.

They were very giddy and bewildered on coming out, like persons fasting whose stomachs are full of alcohol. The weather was delightful. A caressing breeze played on their faces.

M. Sauvage, whose intoxication the warm air had completed, stood still: "Suppose we go there."

"Where do you mean?"

"Why a-fishing, of course."

"But where?"

"Why, to our island. The French advance posts are near Colombes. I know Colonel Dumoulin—they will let us pass easily."

Morissot trembled with desire. "It's done—I am with you." And they separated in order to go home and get their fishing tackle.

An hour after they were marching side by side on the main road. Soon they reached the villa occupied by Colonel Dumoulin. He smiled at their request and consented to their odd whim. They took up their march again, furnished with a passport.

Presently they crossed the advance posts, traversed Colombes, now abandoned, and found themselves on the border of some little vineyards which slope down toward the Seine. It was about eleven o'clock.

Before them the village of Argenteuil seemed dead. The heights of Orgemont and of Sannois dominated all the country. The immense plain which extends as far as Nanterre was bare, entirely bare, with its naked cherry trees and gray lands.

M. Sauvage, pointing a finger at the heights, murmured: "The Prussians are up there!" And a great fear paralyzed the two friends before this deserted country.

"The Prussians!" They had never seen them, but they *felt* them here during some months, around Paris, destroying France, pillaging, slaughtering, causing the famine, invisible and all-powerful. And a kind of superstitious terror added itself to the hatred which they had for this unknown and victorious people.

Morissot faltered, "What if we should fall into them?"

M. Sauvage replied with that Parisian humor which nothing can extinguish, "We should offer them a fry!"

Still they hesitated to venture into the country, intimidated by the silence all around the horizon.

At length M. Sauvage made up his mind: "Come on, let's make a start. But caution's the word." And they descended into a vineyard, crouching low, crawling on all fours, profiting by the bushes in order to hide themselves, with eyes alert and ears strained to the pitch.

A strip of bare land remained to cross in order to reach the river bank. They broke suddenly into a run, and as

soon as they had gained the bank, they squatted flat in the dry reeds.

Morissot glued his ear to the ground, trying to detect any sound of the enemy marching in the country around them. He heard nothing. They were indeed alone—absolutely alone. Feeling now thoroughly reassured, they began to fish.

Precisely in front of them lay Marante Island, now abandoned, hiding them from the other shore. The little restaurant house was closed, looking as though it had been deserted for years.

M. Sauvage took the first trout, Morissot landed the second, and from moment to moment they raised their poles with a little silvered animal at the end of the line. Truly a miraculous fishing!

They put the catch carefully into a net with very close meshes, which lay soaking at their feet. And a delicious joy pervaded them, the sort of joy that seizes you when you recover a beloved pleasure of which you have been deprived a long time.

The genial sun poured its warmth between their shoulders; they heard nothing more at all; they thought of nothing; they ignored and forgot the rest of the world: they were fishing!

But suddenly a heavy sound which seemed to come from under the earth caused the ground to tremble. The cannon was again beginning to thunder.

Morissot turned his head, and above the river bank he saw down there toward the left, the mighty silhouette of Mount Valerian which carried on its crest a white plume, a smoke of powder which it had just spit out. And at

once a second jet of smoke leaped from the summit of the fortress, followed in a few instants by a new explosion.

Then other detonations succeeded, and momentarily the mountain belched its deadly breath and exhaled its milky vapors, which rose slowly in the calm heaven, making a cloud above it.

M. Sauvage shrugged his shoulders. "They are beginning again," he said.

Morissot, who was anxiously watching his floater as it bobbed up and down, was suddenly seized with the rage of a peaceable man against those lunatics who were thus fighting. "Men must be mad to kill one another like that," he burst forth.

M. Sauvage rejoined: "They are worse than wild beasts."

And Morissot, who had just taken a trout, declared: "And to think that it must be always thus, so long as there are governments!"

M. Sauvage interjected: "But the Republic would not have declared this war——"

Morissot interrupted him: "With kings we have war on the outside; with the Republic we have war on the inside."

So they went on arguing the matter tranquilly, clearing up great political problems with the sane reason of men good-natured and of limited vision; agreeing upon this point, that the people would never be free. And Mount Valerian thundered incessantly, demolishing French houses with cannon balls, crushing out lives, destroying human beings, putting a sad end to many dreams,

to many expected joys, to much hoped-for happiness; opening in the hearts of women, of girls and of mothers in other countries, sufferings that would never cease.

"Such is life," declared Monsieur Sauvage.

"Say rather such is death," replied Morissot, laughing.

Then they started with fear, feeling rather than hearing a sound of marching feet behind them; and turning their eyes they saw standing bolt upright at their shoulders four men, four tall, armed and bearded men, dressed in livery like servants, wearing flat helmets and with guns leveled point-blank at them.

The two fishing lines dropped from their hands and floated swiftly down the river.

In a few seconds they were seized, bound, lifted up, thrown into a boat and carried over to the island. And behind the restaurant which they had believed to be abandoned, they saw a score of German soldiers.

A sort of hairy giant sitting astride a chair and puffing at a long porcelain pipe, asking them in excellent French: "Well, gentlemen, have you had good sport?"

Then a soldier placed at the officer's feet the net full of fishes which he had taken care to bring over. The Prussian smiled. "Ah, I see indeed that it was not going badly. But now we have another matter on our hands. Hear me and do not be troubled.

"For me you are two spies, sent to watch me. I take you and I shoot you. You were making a pretence of fishing in order to hide your real projects. You fell into my hands. So much the worse for you: such is war!

"But as you came through the advance posts you have undoubtedly the password to return. Give me that word and you shall go free."

The two friends, livid, side by side, their hands agitated with a slight nervous trembling, remained silent.

The officer went on: "Nobody will ever know it, you shall return peaceably. The secret will disappear with you. If you refuse, it is death, and at once. Make your choice!"

They stood motionless, without opening their mouths.

The Prussian, always calm, continued, extending his hand with a significant gesture toward the river: "Think that in five minutes you will be at the bottom of this water. In five minutes! You must have families?"

Mount Valerian was thundering always.

The two fishermen remained upright and silent. The German gave some orders in his own tongue. Then he shifted his chair in order not to be too near the prisoners. Twelve armed soldiers marched up and halted at twenty paces from the prisoners.

The officer said: "I give you one minute—not two seconds more."

Then he rose quickly, approached the two Frenchmen, took Morissot by the arm, drew him aside and said in a low voice:

"Quick, the password! Your comrade shall know nothing—I shall pretend to relent."

Morissot answered nothing.

The Prussian then took Monsieur Sauvage aside and made the same demand of him. Sauvage did not answer.

They were now again side by side.

The officer gave the first word of command. The soldiers raised their arms.

Then Morissot's glance fell by chance on the net full of fishes, lying on the grass a few feet away. A ray of sunlight caused the heap of fishes to sparkle; they were still alive and squirming. In spite of his efforts Morissot's eyes filled with tears.

He faltered: "Adieu, Monsieur Sauvage."

M. Sauvage answered: "Adieu, Monsieur Morissot."

They clasped hands, shaken from head to foot with invincible emotion.

The officer cried, "Fire!" . . . The twelve shots sounded like one.

M. Sauvage fell like a block on his face. Morissot, being taller, wavered, pivoted and fell across his comrade, his face upturned to the sky, while bubbles of blood escaped from his tunic which had been pierced at the chest.

The German gave more orders. His men scattered, then returned with cords and stones, which they attached to the dead men's feet; then they carried them to the river bank.

Mount Valerian never ceased its deep rumblings, covered now with another mountain of smoke.

Two soldiers took Morissot by the head and the feet; two others seized Sauvage in the same fashion. The bodies, balanced an instant with force, were launched far out, described a curve, then plunged upright into the stream, the stones dragging the feet first. The water splashed, bubbled, shivered, then grew calm again while many little waves went to either shore.

A little blood floated.

The officer, always serene, said in a low voice: "It is the fishes' turn now." Then he turned toward the house.

And suddenly he saw the net with the trout lying in the grass. He picked it up, examined it, smiled, and called, "Wilhelm!"

A soldier in a white apron ran forward. And the officer, throwing him the catch of the two fusilladed men, ordered: "Have this mess fried at once while they are still alive. That will be delicious."

Then he went on smoking his pipe.

A TRAGEDY OF THE WAR

(La Folle)

Bless my soul, said Matthew d'Endolen, the woodcocks * recall me to a very sad and tragical incident of the war. †

You know my property in the faubourg of Cormeil. I was living there at the moment when the Prussians arrived. One of my neighbors was a species of lunatic, though perfectly harmless, whose mind had given way under the blows of misfortune. Formerly at the age of twenty-five, she had lost in the space of a single month her husband, her father, and her new-born child.

When death has once entered a house, it almost always returns there directly, as if it knew the door.

The poor young woman, broken by grief and suffering, took to her bed and lay there delirious during six weeks. Then, a sort of calm weariness following this violent crisis, she still kept to her bed, motionless, hardly eating at all, only moving her eyes. Whenever those about her wished to make her get up, she cried as if they were going to kill her. So they left her always in bed, only taking her from it for the cares of the toilet, and when it was necessary to turn her mattress.

* See *Contes de La Bécasse* by de Maupassant.
† The Franco-Prussian War, 1870-71.

An old woman servant waited on her, giving her something to drink from time to time, or a morsel of cold meat. What was passing in that bewildered soul? No one ever knew, for she spoke no more. Was she thinking of the dead? Was she dreaming sadly, without any clear or definite recollection of the past? Or, indeed, had her thought, destroyed, remained stagnant, motionless like water without a current?

During fifteen years she existed in this way, shut up in her room and to all intents lifeless.

The war came, and in the first days of December the Prussians penetrated to Cormeil. I remember all that like a thing of yesterday. It was freezing to split the stones, and I had stretched myself in a long chair, being at the time helpless with the gout, when I heard the heavy and rhythmical tread of their marching feet. I saw them pass, as I looked from my window.

They went by interminably, all similar, with that grotesque movement of marionettes which is peculiar to the German soldiers. Then the officers distributed their men among the people. I had seventeen of them. My neighbor, the demented woman, was allotted twelve, whose commander was a soldier of the arbitrary Prussian type, violent, surly, and pigheaded.

Affairs went normally enough in the first days of the occupation. They had told the officer, privately, that the lady of the house was sick; and he gave himself little trouble about her. But soon, the thought of this woman whom nobody ever saw, began to annoy him. He inquired as to her disease, and was told that his hostess had been confined to her bed during fifteen years as the

result of a great affliction. Undoubtedly he did not believe the story, and he imagined that the poor creature would not leave her bed through pride, in order that she might not have to see the Prussians, or to speak to them, or to come in contact with them.

He demanded that she should receive him, and he was invited to enter her chamber. Then, addressing her in a harsh voice, with a heavy Teuton accent, he said:

"I must beg you, Matame, to get up und gome downstairs, in order that ve may have the bleasure of seeing you."

She turned upon him her vague eyes, void of all expression, and answered not a word.

He continued: "I vill not dolerate any insolence. If you do not rise of your own goot vill, I shall find means to make you bromenate all by yourself."

The sick woman made not even a gesture, always motionless and impassive as if she did not see him.

He raged, mistaking this calm silence for a mark of supreme contempt. And he added: "If you have not gome down by to-morrow——" Then he went out.

On the morrow the old nurse, almost mad herself with grief and despair, attempted to dress her; but the poor, senseless creature began to scream and struggle desperately. The officer quickly ran upstairs, and the servant, throwing herself upon her knees, appealed to him:

"She does not wish to get up, Monsieur, she does not wish to get up. Have pity and pardon her—she is so unfortunate!"

The soldier stood hesitating and embarrassed, not dar-

ing, in spite of his anger, to have her dragged from the bed by his men. But suddenly he began to laugh, as having hit upon a happy idea, and he gave some orders in German.

And soon I saw a detachment of soldiers leave the house carrying a mattress, as a wounded person is carried. In this couch, which had not been undone, the demented woman, always silent, remained perfectly tranquil, indifferent to anything that might happen, so long as she was permitted to lie abed. A soldier marching behind, carried a bundle of feminine apparel.

And the officer pronounced, while rubbing his hands genially:

"Ve shall see if you are able to tress yourself all alone und make a leetle bromenate."

Then I watched the procession disappearing in the direction of the forest of Imauville.

Two hours later the soldiers returned without her.

We never saw the hapless victim again. What had they done with her? Where had they carried her? We never were able to learn.

The snow was falling day and night, burying the plain and the woods under a shower of frozen foam. And the wolves, grown bold and ravenous, came to howl at our very doors.

I was haunted by the thought of this poor unfortunate, and I made several attempts at the Prussian headquarters to get some information as to her fate. I was within an ace of being shot for my pains.

The spring returned. The army of occupation de-

parted. My neighbor's house remained shut up. The thick grass sprang up in the alleys. During the winter the old nurse had died. Nobody any longer concerned himself about this sinister drama; alone, I thought about it constantly. What had the Prussians done with this woman? Had she made her escape through the woods? Had the people picked her up somewhere and kept her in a hospital, without being able to elicit from her any information? Nothing happened to enlighten my doubts; but little by little time appeased the painful anxiety of my heart.

Now, in the following autumn, the woodcocks passed in great multitude; and as my gout was giving me a little respite, I dragged myself as far as the woods. Already I had killed four or five of the long-beaked birds, when I brought down one that disappeared in a ditch partly filled with brushwood. I was forced to go down into it in order to recover my game, and near it I found a death's head, with a few bones of the skeleton. Then swiftly the thought of the maniac struck me in the heart like a fist blow. Many others had died in this wood, perhaps, in that fatal year; but I know not why, I was sure, sure I tell you, that I had found the head of this unfortunate creature.

And suddenly I understood, I divined the whole. They had abandoned her on the mattress, in the forest, cold and deserted; and faithful to her fixed idea, she would not rise from her bed, but allowed herself to perish under the thick and light down of the snow, and without moving hand or foot.

Then the wolves had devoured her.

And the birds had made their nests with the wool of her torn bed.

I have kept this sad relic of death. And I pray that our sons may never see another war.

APPARITION

THEY were talking of sequestration—(the legal setting aside of the property of a deceased person)—àpropos of a recent lawsuit. It was toward the close of an intimate social evening in a fine old house in the Rue de Grenelle, and each one had his story to tell, a story he affirmed to be true.

Finally the aged Marquis de la Tour-Samuel rose from his chair and came to lean against the chimney-piece. He began in his slightly tremulous voice:

"I, also, know a strange thing, so strange that it has been the obsession of my life. It is now fifty-six years since this adventure happened to me, and yet not a month passes but I see it over again, as in a dream. From that day there has remained in me a mark, an impression of fear. Yes, I suffered unspeakable fear during ten minutes, in such sort that from that hour a kind of constant terror has been fixed in my soul. Unexpected noises startle me to the very heart; objects that I perceive ill in the shadow of evening give me a wild wish to flee. In a word, I am afraid at night.

"Oh, I should not have confessed this when I was younger: at my present age I may avow anything. It is allowable to shrink before imaginary dangers when one is eighty-two years old. Before actual dangers I have never flinched, Mesdames!

"This affair so shocked and overthrew my spirit, cast in my mind a trouble so profound, so mysterious, so terrible, that I have never heretofore told the story. I have kept it in the uttermost depth of my soul,—in that place sacred to our inner self, where we hide the painful secrets, the shameful things, all the unavowable weaknesses of our lives.

"I am going to tell you the thing just as it was, without attempting to explain it. Likely enough there may be an explanation for it, unless I had my hour of madness. But no, I was not mad; and I shall give you the proof of it. Imagine what you please—here are the simple facts.

"In the month of July, 1827, I was in garrison at Rouen. One day, as I was strolling on the quay, I saw a man whose appearance seemed familiar, although I could not recall precisely who he was. Instinctively I made a movement as if to stop. The stranger perceived this gesture, looked at me, and fell into my arms.

"He was a friend of my youth of whom I had been very fond. During the five years since I had last seen him he seemed to have aged a half-century. His hair was all white and he walked with a stoop, as if broken down. He understood my surprise and told me the story of his life. A terrible misfortune had stricken him.

"Having fallen madly in love with a young girl, he had married her in a sort of ecstasy of happiness. After a year of superhuman felicity and passion unappeasable, she died suddenly of a disease of the heart,—killed by love itself, beyond doubt. He had left his château the very day of the burial, and come to live in his house at Rouen. There he was living now, solitary and in despair, devoured

by grief, so wretched that he could think only of suicide.

"'Since I thus meet you again,' he said, 'I shall ask you to do me a great service,—to go to the château and get some papers for me, of which I have urgent need. You will find them in a writing desk in my room—in *our* room. I cannot charge a subaltern or a lawyer's clerk with this duty, for I must have an impenetrable discretion and an absolute silence. As for myself, I would not return to that house for anything in the world!

"'I shall give you the key of that chamber, which I locked up myself on leaving, and also the key of my writing desk. Besides, you shall deliver a note from me to my gardener, who will admit you to the château. But come and breakfast with me to-morrow, and we will talk of all this.'

"I promised to perform this slight service for him—what was it but a promenade, his estate lying not more than five miles from Rouen? At the most, an hour on horse-back.

"At ten o'clock next morning I was at his house in Rouen. We breakfasted alone together, but he did not speak twenty words. He begged me to excuse him; the thought of the visit I was about to make to that house—to that chamber where his happiness lay buried, overpowered him, he said. Indeed, he seemed strangely agitated and preoccupied, as if a mysterious combat were being waged in his soul.

"Finally, he explained to me exactly what I should do. It was very simple. I was to get two packets of letters and a bundle of papers from the first right-hand drawer

of the secretary to which I held the key. He added:

"'I . . . I have no need to beg you not to look about that room.'

"I was hurt by this speech, and I told him so a little sharply. He stammered: 'Pardon me, my friend; I suffer so much.' And he began to weep. . . . I left him toward one o'clock in order to perform my mission.

"It was radiant weather, and soon I was going at a rapid trot across the prairies, hearing the songs of the larks and the rhythmic sound of my sabre on my boot.

"Then I entered the forest and I drew up my horse to a walk. Branches of trees caressed my face; and sometimes I caught a leaf between my teeth and chewed it hungrily in one of those joys of living which fill you, one knows not why, with a tumultuous and, as it were, unseizable happiness—with a kind of intoxication of strength.

"On approaching the château, I searched in my pocket for the letter which I was to give the gardener, and I discovered to my astonishment that it was sealed. I was so surprised and irritated that I was almost on the point of turning back, leaving my errand unperformed. Then I thought that in so acting I should convict myself of bad taste. Besides, my friend might well have sealed the letter unwittingly, in his great trouble and distress.

"The manor seemed to have been deserted during twenty years. Open and dilapidated, the gate held upright you knew not how. Grass filled the walks; you could not distinguish the borders of the flowerbeds.

"At the noise I made kicking against a shutter an old man started from a side-door, and seemed stupefied at

seeing me. I leaped to the ground and delivered my letter. He read it, re-read it, turned it over in his hands, considered me furtively, put the paper in his pocket and said:

" 'Well! what do you want?'

"I answered brusquely: 'You ought to know, since you have received there your master's orders: I wish to enter the château.'

"He seemed thunderstruck. After a pause he articulated: 'Then you are going into . . . into *her* chamber?'

"I was beginning to lose patience. 'The devil!—Is it your purpose to cross-examine me?'

"He stammered: 'No . . . Monsieur . . . but the fact is . . . that is to say, the room has not been opened since the death. If you will only wait five minutes I'll go and see if . . . go and see if . . .'

"I broke in angrily: 'Come now, are you going to make a fool of me? How can you enter that room since I have the key?'

"He knew not what to say. 'Then, Monsieur, I will show you the way.'

" 'Show me the stairway and leave me alone. I shall find my way without you.'

" 'But . . . Monsieur . . . notwithstanding . . .'

"This time I was provoked beyond bounds. 'Now are you going to shut up and leave me alone, or do you want to have trouble with me?' So saying, I pushed him roughly aside and entered the house.

"First I went through the kitchen, and then through two small rooms occupied by this man and his wife. I

crossed then a large vestibule, I mounted the stairs, and I recognized the door described by my friend.

"I opened it without difficulty and I entered.

"The room was so deep in shadow that I could distinguish nothing at first. I stopped, seized by that mildewed, insipid odor peculiar to rooms uninhabited and condemned,—death chambers. Then, little by little, my eyes became accustomed to the obscurity, and I saw plainly enough a large room in disorder and a bed without bedclothing, but with mattresses and pillows, one of which bore the deep impression of an elbow or a head, as if someone had just lain down there.

"Some chairs were scattered about. I remarked that one door, that of a wardrobe evidently, stood partly open.

"I went at once to the window to admit more light, and I opened it, but the shutter-fastenings were so rusted that I could not budge them. I even tried to break them with the hilt of my sword. As I was only irritating myself by these useless efforts, and as by this time my eyes had become used to the dim light, I gave up the hope of seeing more clearly and went to the secretary.

"I sat down in a chair before it, I lowered the tablette, I found the drawer indicated by my friend. It was stuffed with papers. I wanted only three packets which I knew how to identify, and I began a careful search.

"I was straining my eyes to the utmost in order to decipher the superscriptions, when I thought I heard or rather felt a rustling behind me. I gave no heed to it, thinking that a breath of air had moved a curtain.

"But in a minute another movement, scarcely perceptible, caused a singular little disagreeable shiver to pass

along my spine. It was so cowardly and stupid to admit such a sensation that I hated to turn around, through shame for myself. I had just found the second packet that I wanted, and was on the point of taking up the third, when a deep and painful sigh breathed against my shoulder made me leap like a madman clear across the room.

"In my panic I had turned completely round, the hand on the hilt of my sword, and certainly had I not felt it at my side, I should have fled like a coward.

"A tall woman, dressed in white, was looking at me, standing behind the chair where I had been seated a second before.

"Such a shock ran through my members that I almost fell backward. Oh, nobody can understand that awful terror, unless he has experienced it. The soul melts; the heart ceases to beat; the entire body becomes soft as a sponge; all one's inner physical self seems to collapse.

"I do not believe in ghosts—well! I almost swooned under the hideous fear of the dead, and I suffered, oh! suffered during a few moments more than in all the rest of my life, in the anguish of supernatural terror.

"If she had not spoken I should have gone mad, perhaps. But she spoke: she spoke in a sweet and sorrowful voice that made the nerves vibrate.

"I dare not say that I regained control of myself, or that I recovered my reason. No, I was distracted to such a point that I knew not what I was doing; but that intimate pride of self which is part of my character and also my feeling as a soldier, enabled me to keep, almost in spite of myself, an honorable bearing. I was posing for myself, as it were, and for her, too, undoubtedly; for her,

whatever she might be, woman or ghost. I accounted for all this to myself later, for I assure you that in the instant of the apparition, I could think of nothing. I was simply paralyzed with fear.

"She said: 'Oh, Monsieur, you can do me a great service!'

"I wished to answer, but found it impossible to utter a word. A vague noise issued from my throat.

"She went on: 'Are you willing? You can save me—cure me. I suffer dreadfully—oh, how I suffer!'

"She sat down softly in my chair. She looked at me fixedly. 'Do you wish to help me?'

"I nodded 'Yes!' my voice being still paralyzed.

"Then she reached me a tortoise-shell comb, murmuring:

"Comb me, oh, comb me! that will cure me—some one *must* comb me! Look at my head . . . How I am suffering; and my hair makes me ill!'

"Her hair undone, very long, very black, hung over the back of the chair and touched the floor.

"Why did I do it? Why did I, shivering, receive the comb from her hand? And why did I take up in my hands her long hair which gave me a sensation of frightful cold as though I had touched serpents? That sensation long remained in my fingers, and I start only to think of it.

"I combed her. I handled, I know not how, that icy headdress, I twisted it, I braided and then unbraided it; I tressed it as one tresses a horse's mane. She was breathing long breaths; her head bent low; and she seemed happy.

"Suddenly she said, 'Thanks!' snatched the comb from my hands and fled through the door which I had remarked to be partly open.

"Left alone, I had during some seconds the fear and confusion of awakening that follow a nightmare. Finally I recovered my senses and, running to the window, burst open the shutters with a furious attack.

"A flood of light filled the room. I threw myself against the door through which the Being had gone. I found it closed and it resisted me like a rock.

"Then a fever of flight seized upon me,—a panic,—the true panic of battles. I caught up hastily the three packets of letters from the open secretary; I dashed from the room and leaped down the stairs four at a time; I found myself outside but by what exit I never knew, and seeing my horse within a few paces, I bounded into the saddle and started off at a gallop.

"I drew rein only at Rouen, and before my quarters. Throwing the bridle to an orderly, I escaped to my room where I shut myself up in order to reflect upon this terrible event.

"Then, during an hour, I asked myself if I had not been the sport of an hallucination. Surely I had had one of those incomprehensible nervous attacks, one of those disorders of the brain which give birth to miracles and to which the Supernatural owes its power.

"And I was going to believe in a vision—an error of the senses—when I drew near the window and inadvertently my glance fell on my breast. *My coat was full of long hairs which were twined around the buttons!*

"I seized them one by one with trembling fingers and threw them out of the window.

"Then I called my orderly. I felt too much moved and troubled to go to my friend's house that day. And, besides, I wished to reflect carefully as to what I ought to tell him. I sent him his letters, and he gave a receipt to the soldier. He inquired very much about me and was told that I was sick, having received a slight sunstroke; or something of the sort. He seemed greatly disturbed.

"I went to his house next morning at dawn, resolved to tell him the truth. He had gone out the night before, and had not returned. I went back during the day; no one had seen him again. I waited a week; he did not reappear. Then I informed the authorities. They hunted for him everywhere, without finding a trace of his flight or of his retreat.

"A minute inspection was made of the deserted château. Nothing suspicious was discovered, and no indication revealed that a woman had been hidden there.

"The search, yielding no result, was presently given up.

"And during fifty-six years I have learned nothing that would clear up the mystery. I know nothing more."

FEAR

After dinner we went up on deck again. The Mediterranean extended before us, without a wrinkle on all its surface, shimmering with changeful brilliancy under a large, calm moon. The great ship glided on her way, throwing against the heaven, which seemed to be sown with stars, a thick serpent of black smoke; while in our wake the water foaming white, torn by the rapid passage of the heavy vessel, churned by the screw, writhed, struggled, burst into so many sea-fires that one might have likened it to the light of a boiling moon!

There were six or eight of us, silent, admiring the scene, looking toward the distant Africa whither we were bound. The Commandant, smoking a cigar in the midst of us, suddenly resumed a conversation we had begun at dinner.

"Yes, I was terribly afraid that day. My ship remained for six hours beaten by the sea, with a great rock in her side. Luckily we were picked up toward night by an English collier which had sighted us."

Then a tall man, sunburned to a tint of bronze and of grave aspect—one of those men who, one feels, has traversed great unknown countries in the midst of incessant perils, and whose tranquil eye seems to keep in its depth something of the strange landscape he has seen, one of

those men whose courage, one divines, has been proven like tempered steel, spoke for the first time.

"You say, Commandant, that you were afraid—that you experienced great fear—on this occasion? Pardon me!—I am quite unable to agree with you that such was the fact. You deceive yourself both as to the word 'fear' and the sensation which it describes. An energetic man knows no fear, is never afraid in face of pressing danger. He may be disturbed, agitated, anxious; but *Fear*—that is a different thing."

The Commandant answered, laughing:

"The deuce you say! I declare to you frankly that I was thoroughly frightened, all the same."

Then the sun-browned voyager continued, choosing his words deliberately:

"Allow me to explain. Fear—and the boldest men are subject to it—is something frightful, a terrible sensation like the dissolution of the soul, a dreadful convulsion of heart and brain, which merely to recall brings tremors of anguish. But that never happens to a brave man before an attack, or before inevitable death, or before danger in any of its familiar shapes: it happens only in certain abnormal circumstances, under certain mysterious influences, in face of vague and shadowy perils.

"Fear—the *true Fear*—is something like a reminiscence of the fantastic terrors of bygone times. A man who believes in ghosts, and who imagines that he sees one at night, ought to realize fear in all its unspeakable horror.

"I myself suffered this kind of fear in broad daylight, about ten years ago. I felt it again, last winter, through a December night.

"Notwithstanding, I have run many risks, had many adventures which seemed fatal. I have fought often. I have been wounded and left for dead by robbers. I have been condemned, as a rebel, to be hanged in America; and I have been thrown into the sea from the deck of a ship, on the coast of China. Each time I believed myself lost, and I instantly resolved to accept my fate, without emotion and without regrets.

"But that is not *Fear*.

"I have felt it in Africa. And yet it is a child of the North: the sun scatters it like a mist. Note this well, my friends: Life with Orientals counts for nothing; people are there resigned, at once, to any fatality. The nights are clear, without shadow or hint of the lurking unknown, free of those gloomy disquietudes which haunt the mind in cold countries. In the Orient you can experience panic—but you never know *Fear*.

"Well, I am going to tell you what happened to me in this land of Africa.

"I was crossing the great sand dunes to the south of Ouargla.* There surely is one of the strangest countries in the world. You know the smooth sand, the level, flat sand of the innumerable ocean coasts. Well, imagine the ocean itself suddenly turned into sand in the midst of a hurricane; imagine a silent tempest of motionless waves of yellow dust. High as mountains are these unequal surges, towering like billows of the sea in full career, but greater still, their yellow sides striated like watered silk. Upon this formidable ocean, silent and without movement, the devouring sun of the South pours its implacable. direct

* An oasis of the Algerian desert.

rays. You have to climb those ridges or rather blades of burnt cinder, descend again the other side, climb again, climb ever and always, without respite, without repose, and without shade. The horses choke, sink down, buried to the knees, and constantly slip in descending the opposite slope of those amazing sand-hills.

"We were two friends, followed by eight Spahis * and four camels with their drivers. Overcome with heat and fatigue, parched with a thirst like the burning desert itself, we spoke no more to one another, but struggled silently, desperately onward. Suddenly one of our men uttered a strange cry. All stopped, and there we stood, fixed and motionless, halted by a baffling phenomenon of the desert, which is not unknown to travelers in those God-forsaken countries.

"Somewhere, quite near us, but in what precise direction one could not determine, a drum was rolling, the mysterious drum of the sand dunes. It was beating distinctly, now louder and more vibrant, now feebler, dying away, ceasing; then resuming its fantastic music.

"The Arabs, terrified, looked at each other, and one of them said in his tongue: 'Death is upon us!' And suddenly my companion, my friend, almost my brother, fell from his horse head-foremost, stricken by the awful heat of the sun.

"Then, during two hours, while I was vainly trying every possible means to save him, this infernal, unseizable drum filled my ear with its monotonous rat-a-tat-tat, intermittent and mysterious. And I felt it slip into my bones—the fear, the hideous fear, the *true Fear*, before

† Native horse soldiers.

this corpse of my beloved dead, in this hole ravaged by the sun between four mountains of sand; while the unknown echo threw to us, at a distance of two hundred leagues from any French settlement, the rapid beating of the drum.

"That day I understood what it was to have Fear; but I learned it still better another time."

The Commandant interrupted the story-teller.

"Pardon, Monsieur, but this drum you speak of:— what was it?"

The traveler replied:

"I cannot tell you. Nobody seems to know, positively. The French officers, frequently surprised by this ghostlike reveille, explain it in a manner. They attribute it to a hail of sand-grains carried by the wind and striking against a clump of dry vegetation, producing an echo which is multiplied and greatly increased in volume by its passage through the dune hollows. It had been remarked that the phenomenon always occurs in the vicinity of some small plants burned by the sun, and hard as parchment. This drum then would be only a sound-mirage—no more. But I did not learn that until a later day.

"I come to my second experience of the real *Fear*.

"It was last winter in a forest of Northeastern France. So dark was the sky, the night seemed to have come two hours earlier than its wonted time. I had as guide a peasant who marched beside me in a very narrow road under a vault of pine trees from which the furious wind drew howlings. Between the tops of the trees I saw the clouds fleeing in disorder, desperate clouds which seemed

to fly before some terror. From time to time, under an immense squall, the whole forest bowed in the same direction with a moan of anguish; and the cold seized me in spite of my rapid gait and my heavy clothing.

"We were to sup and sleep at the house of an old forester whose place was not very far distant. I was going there to hunt.

"My guide sometimes raised his eyes and murmured, 'What awful weather!' Then he talked about the people to whom we were going. The father had killed a poacher two years before, and since that time he had seemed gloomy, as if haunted by the memory of the deed. His two sons, both married, lived with him.

"The shadows had grown deeper. I could see nothing before me or around me, and all the foliage of the trees interlacing and striking against each other filled the night with an incessant rumor. At length I perceived a light, and presently my companion stumbled against a door. Shrill cries of women responded to us; then a man's voice, a choking voice, demanded:

"'Who goes there?'

"My guide named himself. We entered and beheld a tableau never to be forgotten.

"An old, white-haired man, wild-eyed, with a loaded gun in hand, awaited us, standing in the middle of the kitchen, while two tall, sturdy fellows armed with axes, guarded the door. I made out in the dark corners two women kneeling, their faces hidden against the wall.

"We explained our visit. The old man set his weapon against the wall, and gave orders to have a room prepared for me; then as the women did not move, he said to me abruptly:

"'Look you, Monsieur, I killed a man two years ago this night. Last year he returned to haunt me. I am expecting him again to-night.'

"Then he added in a tone which made me smile: 'Consequently we are not much at our ease, as you see.'

"I reassured him as well as I could, and thought myself happy to have come just that night so as to witness a spectacle of superstitious terror. I related some stories, and succeeded finally in calming almost everybody.

"Near the fire an old dog, almost blind and with a moustache, one of those dogs who look like some people you know, slept with his nose between his paws

"Outside a terrific storm was beating against the little house, and through a narrow square of glass, a sort of 'Judas' or peep-hole placed near the door, I got a sudden glimpse of a confused mass of trees hustled by the wind, in the play of great flashes of lightning.

"In spite of my best efforts, I felt, indeed, that a profound terror possessed these people; each time I ceased speaking all ears were strained toward the distance. Weary at length of these imbecile fears, I was going to ask to be shown to my room, when the old game-keeper suddenly leaped from his chair, seized again his musket, exclaiming wildly: 'There he is . . . there he is! I hear him!'

"The two women again fell on their knees in the corners of the room, each hiding her face; and the sons again snatched up their axes. I was going to try once more to quiet them when the old dog, that had been asleep until now, awoke suddenly and raising his head, stretching his neck, looking toward the fire with his eye almost extinct, he emitted one of those lugubrious howls which

startle travelers at night in the country. All eyes now turned to the animal, which remained motionless, stiffened upright on his paws as if petrified by a vision; and he began to howl toward something invisible, unknown, something frightful no doubt, for all his hair bristled on end. The game-keeper, livid with fear, cried out: 'He scents him! he scents him! he was there when I killed him.' And the two distracted women joined their shrieks to the howling of the dog.

"In spite of myself, a great shiver passed along my spine. This vision of the animal, in this place, at this hour, in the midst of these maddened people, was terrifying to witness. Then, during an hour, the dog howled, without budging from his place; he howled weirdly as if in the anguish of a dream. And fear, the true, the terrible *Fear* took hold of me, possessed me completely. Fear of what, you ask? How should I know? It was *the Fear*, that's all!

"We remained paralyzed, livid, in the expectancy of some frightful event, the ear stretched, the heart beating, shocked by the least noise. And the dog began to turn round and round the room, smelling the walls and always howling. The beast was making us mad! Finally the peasant who had brought me, threw himself on the dog, in a sort of paroxysm of furious terror, and opening a door that gave upon a little yard, he flung the animal outside.

"At once he stopped howling; and we were plunged into a silence more terrifying still. Then, suddenly, all together we had a kind of start: somebody was slipping against the outside wall, toward the forest. He passed the door, which he seemed to try with a faltering hand:

then we heard nothing more during two minutes, which suspense made us all perfectly crazy with fear. Then he returned, always rubbing against the wall, and he scratched it lightly, as a child might do with his nail. Suddenly a head appeared against the glass of the Judas —a white head with luminous eyes like those of a deer. And a sound came from his mouth, an indistinct sound like a plaintive murmur.

"Then a formidable explosion burst in the kitchen. The old game-keeper had fired his gun, and instantly the sons rushed forward, and shut off the Judas by placing against it the large table which they backed up with the sideboard.

"And I swear to you that at the noise of that gun-shot, which I was not expecting, I suffered such anguish of heart, of soul and body, that I almost swooned away, ready to die of fear.

"Until dawn we remained in the same position, incapable of moving or uttering a word; held by the iron clutch of an unspeakable terror.

"We dared not open the door until we perceived through a crack in the shutter a thin ray of light.

"At the foot of the wall, against the door, the old dog lay, his jaw broken by a bullet. He had got out of the yard by digging a hole under the fence."

The sun-browned man paused a moment; then he added:

"And yet, on that night I was in no real danger; but, believe me, I would far rather live through again all the hours in which I have affronted the most dreadful perils than the single moment of that gun-shot at the bearded head in the Judas."

JULIE ROMAIN

Two years ago this spring I was touring the Mediterranean coast on foot. I was following that long road which goes from St. Raphael to Italy, or rather that superb and changing scene which seems to have been made for the representation of all the love-poems of the earth. And I was thinking that from Cannes where they pose, to Monaco where they gamble, people come to this country mostly to make a vulgar display, or to juggle with money, in order to expose under the delicious heaven, in this garden of roses, all the low vanities, the stupid pretensions, the ignoble lusts—in short, to exhibit the human spirit as it is, crawling, ignorant, arrogant, and meanly covetous.

Suddenly, at the back of one of those ravishing bays, which meet you at every turn of the mountain, I saw some villas, four or five only, facing the sea. Behind them a wood of wild pines stretched away in the distance, apparently without road or issue. I stopped short before one of these cottages, so pretty it was; a little white house with brown wainscoting and covered with climbing roses to the roof.

And the garden: a mat of flowers, of all colors and shapes, mingled with an artful and coquettish disorder. The lawn was starred with them; each of the stone steps

carried a tuft at its extremities; from the window shutters blue or yellow clusters hung over the dazzling white front; and the terrace with stone balustrades, which this exquisite little house occupied, was garlanded with large bell-flowers like stains of blood. At the rear a long alley of flowered orange trees reaching to the mountain's foot.

On the door in small gold letters this inscription: *Villa of Yesteryear.*

I asked myself what poet or fairy lived here, what inspired solitary had discovered this place and created this dream-house, which seemed to have grown out of a bouquet.

A peasant was breaking stones on the road, a bit farther along. I asked him the name of the owner of this house. He answered, "Madame Julie Romain. . . ."

Julie Romain! In my childhood I had heard much talk about her,—the great actress, the rival of Rachel. No woman had been more applauded and more loved,—more loved, especially. What duels and what suicides for her, and what resounding adventures! How old was she now, this seductress? Sixty—seventy—seventy-five years? Julie Romain! Here, in this house! The woman whom the greatest musician and the rarest poet of our age had adored! I recalled the emotion caused throughout all France (I was then twelve years old) by her flight to Sicily with the latter after her sensational rupture with the former.

She had started one night after a first presentation at which the house had "risen" at her and recalled her eleven

successive times; she had started with the poet in a post-chaise, as they did in those days; they had crossed the sea in order to go and love each other in the ancient isle, daughter of Greece, under the immense wood of orange trees which surrounds Palermo, and which is called the "Golden Shell."

The world had heard of their ascension of Etna and how they had leaned over the immense crater, cheek to cheek, embracing, as if to throw themselves to the bottom of the fiery whirlpool.

He was dead, now, the man of troubling verses, so profound that they had given a vertigo to a whole generation; so subtle, so mysterious that they had opened a new world to new poets.

The other was dead, also, the deserted one, who had found for her phrases of music which have remained fixed in all memories; phrases of triumph and of despair, passionate and heart-breaking.

She was there in this house veiled with flowers!

I did not hesitate: I rang.

A servant answered the bell, a boy of eighteen, with an awkward air and clumsy hands. I wrote on my card a gallant compliment for the old actress, and begged her to receive me. Perhaps she knew my name and would consent to open her door to me.

The young valet went away, then returned and asked me to follow him. He showed me into a Louis Philippe salon, clean and correct, with cold and heavy furniture, from which a sixteen-year-old maid with a slim waist, but homely enough, removed the covers in my honor.

Then I remained alone.

On the walls three portraits: that of the actress in one of her rôles, that of the poet with the long, tight-fitting frock-coat and frilled shirt then in fashion, and that of the musician seated before a harpsichord. She, blonde, charming, affected in the manner of the time, was smiling with her gracious mouth and blue eyes; and the painting was finished, fine, elegant and dry.

The poet and the musician seemed already to regard the near posterity.

All this gave a sense of other times, of days finished and people disappeared.

A door opened, a little woman entered, old, very old, very little, with a front of white hair and white eyebrows; like a white mouse, rapid and furtive.

She gave me her hand and said in a voice which was still fresh, sonorous and vibrant: "Thanks, Monsieur. How polite it is for the men of to-day to remember the women of the past! Sit down!"

I told her how her house had attracted me, how I had wished to know the name of the proprietor, and how, having learned it, I could not resist the desire to knock at her door.

She said: "This gives me the more pleasure, Monsieur, since it is the first time such a thing has happened. When they handed me your card, with its gracious message, I started as if they had announced an old friend absent during twenty years. I am a dead woman, truly a dead woman, whom no one remembers, of whom nobody thinks, until the day when I shall die for good; and then all the newspapers will speak for three days about Julie Romain,

with anecdotes, details and emphatic eulogies. Then it will be over with me."

She stopped, and then added after a pause: "And that will not be long now. Some months—some days—and of this little woman still living there will remain only a little skeleton."

She raised her eyes toward her portrait, which was smiling at her, at this caricature of itself; then she glanced at the two men, the disdainful poet and the inspired musician, who seemed to say to each other: "What does this ruin want of us?"

An indefinable sadness, poignant and irresistible, pressed my heart; the sadness of lives accomplished which still struggle in memories, as one drowns in deep water.

From my place I saw showy and handsome carriages pass rapidly along the road, going from Nice to Monaco. And seated in them were women, young, pretty, rich, happy; men smiling and satisfied. She followed my glance, understood my thought, and murmured with a resigned smile:

"One cannot be and have been!"

I said: "How beautiful life must have been for you!" She sighed deeply, "Beautiful and sweet. That is why I regret it so much."

I saw that she was disposed to talk of herself; and softly, with delicate precautions, as when one touches wounded flesh, I began to question her.

She spoke of her successes, of her intoxications, of her friends, of all her triumphant existence. I demanded of her: "The liveliest joys, the true happiness, was it to the theater that you owed them?"

She answered quickly, "Oh, no!"

I smiled; she rejoined, throwing a sad glance at the two portraits, "It was to them."

I could not help asking, "To which?"

"To both. I even confound them a little in my old memory, and then I have remorse toward one, to-day."

"Then, Madame, it is not to them, but to love itself that your gratitude goes. They were only love's interpreters."

"Perhaps. But what interpreters!"

"Are you sure that you have not been—that you would not have been, as well or better loved by a simple man who would have devoted to you all his life, all his heart, all his thought, all his hours, all his being; while these offered you two terrible rivals, Music and Poetry?"

She cried out with that voice of hers which had remained young and which caused something to vibrate in the soul:

"No, Monsieur, no! Another would have loved me more, perhaps, but he would not have loved me like these. Ah! did they not sing for me the Song of Love as no one else in the world could have sung it? How they intoxicated me! Could a man,—any man whatever,—find what they knew how to find, in sounds and in words? It is not enough to love if one knows not how to put into love all the poesy and all the music of heaven and earth. And *they* knew how to make a woman mad with songs and with words! Yes, there was perhaps in our passion more of illusion than of reality; but such illusions carry you to the skies, while realities leave you always on the earth. If others loved me more, through these alone I understood, I felt, I adored love!"

And suddenly she began to weep; she wept silently, tears of despair. I pretended not to see and looked away in the distance. She went on, after some moments:

"You see, Monsieur, in the case of most persons the heart grows old with the body. With me that has not happened. My poor body is sixty-nine years old, and my poor heart is but twenty. . . . And now you know why I live alone, amidst flowers and dreams."

A long silence followed between us. She calmed herself and presently took up the thread of talk again, smiling as she did so: "How you would make fun of me if you knew . . . if you knew how I pass my evenings . . . when the weather is fine. I shame and pity myself at the same time."

In vain I begged her to tell me; she remained obdurate; at length I rose to go.

She cried: "Already!"

And as I explained that I was to dine at Monte Carlo, she said timidly, "Then you do not care to dine with me? It would give me very much pleasure."

I accepted at once. She rang, enchanted; then, after giving orders to the little maid, she took me through the house.

A sort of glassed veranda, filled with plants, opened on the dining-room and afforded a view of the long alley of orange trees reaching to the mountain. A low seat half-hidden under some shrubs, indicated that the old actress often came there.

Then we went into the garden to see the flowers. The evening was coming on softly, one of those evenings, warm

and calm, which call forth all the perfumes of the earth. There was hardly any light when we sat down to table. The dinner was good and long, and we became close friends when she had satisfied herself of the deep sympathy awakened for her in my heart. She had taken two fingers of wine, as they used to say formerly, and was becoming more confiding, more expansive.

"Come, let us look at the moon," she said. "I adore her, that good moon. She has been the witness of all my best joys. It seems to me that all my memories are up there; and I have only to contemplate her to make them return to me at once. And even . . . sometimes at night . . . I offer myself a pretty spectacle . . . pretty . . . pretty . . . if you knew! But no, you would make fun of me . . . I cannot . . . I dare not . . . no, no . . . truly, no."

She was hesitating. I took her hands, her little hands, so thin and cold, and I kissed them one after the other, several times, as *they* did formerly. She was touched, but she still hesitated.

"You promise me not to laugh?"

"Yes, I swear it."

"Oh, well, then,—come!"

She rose and as the little valet, awkward in his green livery, took away the chair behind her, she said some words in his ear, very low and quickly. He replied: "Yes, Madame, at once."

She took my arm and led me under the veranda. The alley of orange trees was truly beautiful. The moon, already risen, the full moon, cast a thin path of light, a long line of silver that fell on the yellow sand, among the round,

opaque heads of the sombre trees. As these trees were in flower, their perfume strong and sweet filled the night. And in their black verdure one saw thousands of fireflies flitting, like grains of stars.

I exclaimed, "Oh, what a setting for a love scene!"

"Is it not? is it not? You shall see." And she sat down beside me. She murmured: "This is what makes one regret life. But you men of to-day do not think much of these things. You are brokers, merchants and traders. You know not even how to talk to us—when I say 'us' I mean the young. Loves are become *liaisons* which often have a dressmaker's bill for a beginning. If you estimate the bill dearer than the woman, you disappear; but if you estimate the woman dearer than the bill, you pay. Pretty manners . . . and pretty affections! . . ."

She took my hand: "Look."

I gazed, wondering and amazed. Down there, at the end of the alley, in the moon's path, two young persons came along, holding each other by the waist. They came, enlaced, charming, with short steps, crossing the pools of light which illuminated them suddenly, and then re-entering the shadows. He was dressed in a white satin costume of the last century, and wore a hat covered with an ostrich plume. She wore a dress with paniers and the tall powdered coiffure affected by the grand dames of the Regency.

At a hundred steps from us they stopped and standing in the middle of the alley, embraced and curtsied profoundly. And I suddenly recognized the two little domestics. Then one of those terrible gayeties that almost overpower you, twisted me on my seat. However, I did

not laugh. I resisted, sick, convulsed, like a man under an operation.

But the young ones returned toward the end of the alley, and again they became delightful, fairy-like. They went farther and farther, going away, disappearing as disappears a dream. We saw them no more. The vacant alley seemed sad.

I also started, so as not to see them again. For I guessed that this spectacle was bound to last a long time, which awakened all the past,—all the past of love and illusion, the factitious past, deceiving and seducing, falsely and truly charming, which still caused to beat the heart of the old actress, the old lover!

A WOMAN'S HAIR *

THE four walls of the cell were bare and whitewashed. A narrow, iron-barred window, too high for one to reach, admitted the light to this bright, yet sinister little room. The lunatic, seated on a straw chair, regarded us with a fixed eye, an eye vague and haunted. He was very thin, with hollow cheeks and hair almost white, which, one guessed, had become so in a few months. His clothes were too large for his frail limbs, for his narrow chest, for his shrunken figure. You felt that this man was ravaged, eaten by his thought, by *a thought*, like a fruit by a worm. His madness, his Idea, was there, in that head, obstinate, harassing, devouring. It was eating his body little by little. It,—the Invisible, the Impalpable, the Unseizable, the Immaterial Idea was sapping the flesh, drinking the blood, quenching the life of the man.

* Of all Maupassant's wonderful stories perhaps there is not one, with the possible exception of "Le Horla," which, owing to the tragic circumstances of his own fate, have for us an interest so poignant as his little masterpiece "La Chevelure," which I present here under the above title. In this tale we have at its highest value every quality (except humor) that should enter into such a piece of art—or rather, every quality that we have a right to expect from the Norman master. According to my custom, I have made an almost literal version, dropping only a few lines too realistic for the English reader and not material to the story.—M. M.

What a mystery was this man killed by a thought! To look at him, this demoniac, awakened pain, fear and pity. What strange dream, frightful and deadly, lurked behind that forehead which it had crossed with deep furrows, constantly moving? . . .

The doctor said: "He has terrible fits of madness, and is in truth one of the most singular cases I have ever seen. His insanity is of the erotic and macabre kind; he is a sort of necrophile or lover of death. However, he has written a diary which exposes the disorder of his mind in the clearest possible manner. His madness is there, so to say, palpable. If the thing interests you, you may look it over."

I followed the doctor into his office and he handed me the journal of this wretched man. "Read it," he said, "and you shall tell me your opinion." The paper ran as follows:

* * * * * *

Up to my thirty-second year I lived tranquilly, without love. Life appeared to me very simple, very good, and very easy. I was rich. My tastes were so varied that I could not experience a passion for anything. It is good to live. I awoke happy every morning to do the things that pleased me, and I lay down at night satisfied, with a peaceful hope of the morrow and of a future without care. I had had some love affairs, without ever having felt my heart maddened with desire or my soul wounded with love —*after* possession. It is good to live thus. It is better to love, but terrible. So those who love like most people ought to enjoy an ardent happiness, less than mine perhaps; for love came to find me in an incredible manner.

Being rich, I was a collector. I collected rare old furniture and other ancient things; and often I thought of the unknown hands which had touched these objects, of the eyes which had admired them, of the hearts which had loved them,—for one does love *things*. Often I stood during hours and hours gazing on a little watch of the last century. It was so delicate and pretty with its enamel and its chiseled gold. And it was going still as on the day a woman had purchased it in a ravishing desire to possess this exquisite jewel. It had not ceased to palpitate, to live its mechanical life, and always it continued its regular tick, tick, after a hundred years. . . . Who, then, had first carried it on her bosom in the warmth of the silk and lace, the heart of the watch beating against the heart of the woman? What hand had held it at the end of fingers a little warm, had turned it, reversed it, then had wiped the porcelain shepherds, tarnished a second by the moisture of the flesh? What eyes had watched this flowered dial for the awaited hour, the cherished hour, the hour divine! How I should have wished to know her, to see her, the woman who had chosen this exquisite rare object! She is dead! I am possessed by desire for the women of other times; I love, from afar, all those who have loved; the history of past tendernesses fills my heart with regret. Oh, the beauty, the smiles, the hopes, the young caresses —should not all that be eternal! How I have wept whole nights over the poor women of the past, so beautiful, so tender, so sweet, whose arms opened for the kiss, and who are dead! The kiss is immortal—the kiss! It goes from lip to lip, from century to century, from age to age. Men receive it, give it in their turn, and die.

The past attracts me, the present frightens me, because the future is Death. I regret all that has happened; I lament all those who have lived; I should wish to stop time, to arrest the hour. But it goes, it flies, it passes; from second to second it snatches away a little of me for the nothingness of to-morrow. And I shall never live again. Adieu, ye women of the past—I love you! But I am not to be pitied. I found her,—*Her* for whom I had waited long; and I tasted through her ineffable joys. . . .

I was strolling about Paris one sunny morning, light of heart and foot, looking in the shop windows with the vague interest of a stroller. Suddenly, at an antique furniture dealer's, I caught sight of an Italian cabinet of the Seventeenth Century. It was very beautiful, very rare. I attributed it to a Venetian artist, Vitelli, who was celebrated in that epoch. Then I passed on.

Why did the remembrance of this piece of furniture pursue me with such force that I returned on my steps? Again I stopped before the shop in order to examine it again, and I felt that it was tempting me. What a strange thing such a temptation is! You look at an object, and little by little it seduces you, troubles you, invades you, as might a woman's face. Its charm seizes you, a strange charm that comes from its form, its color, its physiognomy *as a thing;* and you love it already, you desire it, you *want* it. A need of possession fastens upon you, a soft need at first, as if timid, but which grows and becomes violent—irresistible. The dealers seem to divine from your glance this secret, increasing desire.

I purchased this cabinet and I had it taken to my house at once. I placed it in my bed-room. Oh, I pity those

who know not the honeymoon of the collector with the bibelot he has just bought. You caress it with eye and hand, as if it were flesh; you come back to it every minute, you think of it always, wherever you may go, whatever you may do. Its beloved memory follows you in the street, in the world, everywhere; and when you return home, even before taking off hat and gloves, you go to contemplate it with the tenderness of a lover. Truly, during eight days I adored this cabinet. I was constantly opening its doors and drawers; I was handling it with ravishment, tasting all the secret joys of possession.

Now, one evening, while feeling the thickness of a panel, I perceived that there ought to be a hidden drawer behind it. My heart began to beat wildly, and I passed the night seeking vainly to discover the secret. I succeeded next day by inserting a knife-blade in a crack of the wood. A panel opened, and I saw, spread out on a black velvet cushion, a marvelous coil of woman's hair! Yes, a woman's hair, an enormous mat of auburn hair, almost red, which had been cut off close to the skin and tied with a gold cord. I stood there trembling, stupefied, troubled. An almost insensible perfume, so old that it seemed but the soul of an odor,—stole out from this mysterious drawer, this surprising relic.

I took it out softly, almost religiously, and I drew it from its hiding place. At once it uncoiled, spreading its golden wave, which fell to the floor, thick and light, supple and shining as the fiery tail of a comet.

A strange emotion seized me. What was this? When, how, why had this hair been shut up in this cabinet? What adventure, what drama lay hidden in this souvenir?

Who had cut it off? A lover, on a day of adieu? A husband, on a day of vengeance? Or perhaps she whose it was, on a day of despair? Was it on entering a cloister that she had thrown there this fortune of love, like a pledge left to the world of the living? Was it on closing the tomb upon her, the young and beautiful dead, that he who had adored her had kept the crown of her hair, the only thing he could preserve of her, the only living part of her body which would not decay, the one thing which he could still love and caress, and kiss in his transports of grief? Was it not strange that this hair should have remained thus, while there was not left a particle of the body with which she had been born?

It flowed over my fingers, it tickled my flesh with a singular caress,—*the caress of one dead!* I felt softened, as if I were going to weep. I kept it in my hands a long time, a long time; then it seemed to me as if something of the soul had remained hidden within it. I put it back on the velvet cushion tarnished by time; I closed the drawer and shut up the cabinet; and I went away through the streets like a man in a dream. . . .

I was going straight on, full of sadness, and also full of trouble,—of that trouble that remains in your heart after the first love-kiss. It seemed to me that I had already lived, in the past, and that I must have known this woman. And Villon's verses rose to my lips, as a sob rises:

> Tell me now in what hidden way is
> Lady Flora, the lovely Roman?
> Where's Hipparchia, and where is Thaïs,
> Neither of them the fairer woman?

Where is Echo, beheld of no man,
Only heard on river and mere,—
She whose beauty was more than human? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

When I had returned to my house I felt an irresistible desire to see again my strange treasure-trove. I took it out and I experienced, on touching it, a long shiver that ran through all my members. During some days, notwithstanding, I remained my ordinary self, although the living thought of the *hair* never left me. As soon as I came in I had to see it and handle it. I turned the key of my cabinet with that shiver one feels on opening the door of the well-beloved, for I had in hands and heart a confused need, singular, constant and sensual, of dipping my fingers in this charming stream of dead hair.

Then, when I had finished caressing it, when I had relocked the cabinet, *I felt it there always*, as if *It* had been a living being, hidden and prisoner; I *felt it there* and I desired it still. Again I experienced the imperious need of taking it up anew, of feeling it, of enervating myself even to sickness by this cold and slippery contact, this irritating, maddening and delicious embrace.

I lived thus a month or two . . . I know no more. It obsessed me—haunted me. I was at once happy and tortured, as in the expectation of love,—as after the avowals which precede the embrace. I shut myself up alone with it in order to feel it on my flesh,—in order to kiss it, to bite it. I twined it around my face. I drowned my eyes in its golden wave that I might see the yellow light through it.

I loved it! Yes, I loved it. I could not live without it nor be an hour without seeing it. And I awaited . . . I awaited . . . what? I know not . . . *Her!*

One night I awoke with the thought that I was not alone in the room. Alone I was, notwithstanding. But I could not get to sleep again, and as I was worrying myself into a fever of insomnia, I got up in order to go and touch the *Hair*. It seemed to me softer and sweeter than usual; more animated. Do the dead return? The kisses with which I warmed it made me almost faint with happiness. I carried it into my bed, and I lay down, pressing it to my lips like a beloved one! . . . The dead *do* return! *She* came. Yes, I saw her, I held her, I had her, such as she was living, in the past: tall, blonde, voluptuous, her bosoms cold, her hips lyre-shaped; and I overran with my caress that divine sinuous line which runs from the throat to the feet, following all the curves of the flesh.

Yes, I had her, every day, every night! She returned, the Dead, the beautiful Dead, the Adorable, the Mysterious, the Unknown, every night. . . . My happiness was so great that I could not hide it. Near *Her* I felt a superhuman ravishment, the profound, inexplicable joy of possessing the Unseizable, the Invisible, the Dead! No lover ever tasted joys more ardent, more terrible. . . .

But I knew not how to hide my happiness. I loved her so much that I never wished to leave her. I took her with me always,—everywhere. I promenaded her about the city as my wife and showed her off at the theatres as my mistress. But they saw her . . . they suspected . . . they took her from me . . . and they threw me into

prison like a malefactor. They took *Her* from me . . . oh, misery! . . .

* * * * * *

There the manuscript ended. And suddenly, as I raised frightened eyes toward the doctor, a shriek of impotent fury resounded through the asylum. I stammered, moved by astonishment, horror and pity: "But . . . this hair . . . does it really exist?"

The doctor opened a cabinet full of phials and instruments, and threw to me across the room a long switch of blonde hair, which flew toward me like a golden bird. I trembled at feeling in my hands its light and caressing touch. . . . The doctor rejoined with a shrug:

"The mind of man is capable of anything!"

ROSE

The two young women have the appearance of being buried under a couch of flowers. They are alone in the immense landau, which is loaded with bouquets, like a giant basket. On the front seat are two white satin hampers full of Nice violets, and on the bearskin which covers their knees a heap of roses, gilliflowers, daisies, tuberoses and orange flowers, seems to crush the two delicate bodies. From this dazzling, perfumed bed emerge to view only the shoulders, the arms and a little of the corsages, one of which is blue and the other lilac.

The coachman's whip carries a scabbard of anemones, the reins are entwined with wall-flowers, the spokes of the wheels are covered with mignonette; and in place of lanterns, two round, enormous bouquets seem like the two strange eyes of this rolling and flowery creature.

Rapidly the landau drives along the route, the Rue d'Antibes, preceded, followed and accompanied by a crowd of other garlanded carriages full of women buried under violets. For it is the Flower Fête at Cannes.

They arrive at the Boulevard de la Foncière where the battle takes place. All along the great avenue a double line of gaily festooned equipages goes and returns like an endless ribbon. From one to another the occupants fling flowers which pass in the air like balls, lightly strike

the bright faces, rebound and fall into the dust, whence they are picked up again by an army of gamins.

A dense crowd ranged on the sidewalks and, kept in order by mounted police who pass brutally and drive back the curious on foot as if to prevent the poor and common from mingling with the rich and noble,—looks on with noisy satisfaction.

In the carriages people call each other by name, they recognize each other, they shower each other with roses. A turnout filled with pretty women costumed in red like devils, attracts and seduces all eyes. A gentleman who bears a resemblance to portraits of Henry IV launches with joyous ardor an enormous bouquet which he holds by an elastic. Under the menace of a blow, the women hide their eyes and the men lower their heads, but the gracious missile, rapid and docile, describes a curve and returns to its master, who throws it as soon toward a new face.

The two young women with full hands empty their arsenal and receive a hail of bouquets; then after an hour of battle, a little weary at last, they order the coachman to follow the road of the Gulf Juan which skirts the sea.

The sun is sinking behind the Esterel, outlining in black against a background of fire the serrated silhouette of the long mountain. Blue and clear, the calm sea extends to the horizon where it mingles itself with the heaven, and the squadron at anchor in the midst of the gulf has the fantastic air of a troop of monstrous animals. motionless on the water; apocalyptic beasts, armored and

hunchbacked, topped with masts frail as plumes, and with eyes that light up when the night falls.

Reclining under the heavy furs, the young women observe all this languishingly. One says at length:

"How delicious an evening like this is when all seems good! Is it not so, Margot?"

Her companion replied: "Yes, it is good. But yet something is lacking."

"What then? I feel perfectly happy and content. I wish for nothing."

"Yes. You do not think of it. Whatever comfort may satisfy the body, we desire something more always . . . for the heart."

And the other, smiling: "A little love?"

"Yes."

They were silent a moment, looking straight before them. Then she who was called Marguerite murmured: "Without that, life does not seem endurable to me. I must be loved, were it only by a dog. We are all alike in this respect, Simone, whatever you may say for yourself."

"Oh, no, my dear. I should prefer not to be loved at all rather than by any one you please. Do you think it would be agreeable to me, for example, to be loved by—by——"

She sought in her mind by whom she could possibly be loved, her glance exploring the vast landscape. Her eyes having made the round of the horizon, fell on the two brass buttons which shone on the coachman's back, and she rejoined, laughing:—"by my coachman."

Madame Margot scarcely smiled and said in a low

voice: "I assure you that it is very amusing to be loved by a domestic. That has happened to me two or three times. They roll their eyes in such a droll way that you almost die laughing! Naturally the more in love they are the more severe you show yourself; then you dismiss them some fine day on the first pretext, because you would become ridiculous if anybody perceived the thing."

Madame Simone listened, her glance lost before her; at last she spoke.

"No, decidedly, the heart of my coachman or footman would not suffice me. Tell me then how you found out that they loved you."

"I found it out as with other men,—when they became stupid."

"The others do not appear so stupid to me when they love me."

"Idiots, my dear, incapable of chatting, or replying, of understanding the least thing."

"But you . . . how did it seem to you to be loved by a servant? Were you moved . . . flattered?"

"Moved, no; flattered, yes—a little. One is always flattered by a man's love, whatever he may be."

"Oh, come, Margot!"

"Assuredly, my dear. But wait, I will tell you a singular adventure that happened to me. You shall see what curious and confused emotions occur to us in such cases.

"Five years ago this fall, I found myself without a maid. I tried five or six, one after the other, and I was almost in despair of getting a suitable person when I saw an advertisement in a newspaper that a young girl knowing how to sew, to embroider and to dress hair was seeking a place

and would give the best references, etc. She spoke English, besides.

"I wrote to the address indicated and on the following day the person in question presented herself. She was tall enough, thin, a little pale, with a very timid manner. She had handsome black eyes, and a charming complexion; in short, she pleased me at once. I demanded her recommendations. She gave me one in English, for she was just leaving the house of Lady Rymwell, she said, where she had remained ten years.

"The certificate attested that the young girl had given up her place of her own free will, in order to return to France, and that her conduct had been without reproach during her long service, except for a little 'French coquetry.'

"The modest turn of the English phrase made me smile a bit, and I engaged the girl on the spot. The same day she entered my house and took up her duties. Her name was Rose.

"At the end of a month I adored her; she was a find, a pearl, a phenomenon.

"She could dress the hair with infinite taste; she could trim the laces of a hat better than the best modistes, and she was a perfect dressmaker. I was amazed by such talents: never had I been served so well.

"She dressed me rapidly with a surprising lightness of touch. Never did I feel her fingers on my flesh, and nothing is so disagreeable to me as the contact of a maid's hand. I fell presently into habits of excessive laziness, so pleasant it seemed to suffer myself to be clothed from foot to head, from the chemise to the gloves, by this tall,

timid girl, always blushing, who scarcely ever spoke. On leaving my bath, she rubbed me and massaged me while I dozed a little on a couch.

"My dear, I considered her as a friend of inferior condition rather than as a mere domestic.

"Now, early one morning my concierge, with a mysterious air, asked leave to speak to me. I was surprised and I had him come in. He was a very reliable man, an old soldier and former orderly of my husband.

"He seemed embarrassed with what he had to say. Finally he managed to stammer out: 'Madame, the police commissary of the quarter is downstairs.'

"I asked sharply: 'What does he want?'

" 'He wants to search the house.'

"Certainly the police have their uses, but I detest them. I don't regard that as a noble profession. And I rejoined, being as much irritated as outraged by the proceeding: 'Why this search? For what purpose? He shall not enter!'

"The concierge said: 'He pretends that there is a criminal hidden here.'

"This time I was frightened, and I ordered the commissary shown in, so that he might explain the matter. He was a well-bred appearing man, decorated with the Legion of Honor. He apologized, begged pardon, and then affirmed that I had among my servants a convict!

"I was terribly shocked; but I answered that I could vouch for all my people, and I mentioned them in review.

" 'The concierge, Pierre Courtin, old soldier.'

" 'Not he.'

" 'The coachman, Francois Pingau, a peasant from Champagne, son of a tenant of my father.'

" 'Not he.'

" 'A stableman, also from Champagne, and likewise son of peasants whom I know; besides, the servant whom you have just seen.'

" 'Not he.'

" 'Then, Monsieur, you see, indeed, that you are deceiving yourself.'

" 'Pardon, Madame, I am sure there is no mistake. Now as the matter concerns a most dangerous criminal, will you have the goodness to call in all your people, here before you and me?'

"I resisted at first, then yielded, and I had all my servants come up. The commissary examined them with a single glance and declared: 'They are not all here.'

" 'Excuse me, Monsieur, besides these there is only my maid, a young girl, whom you will hardly confound with a convict.'

"He demanded: 'Can I see her?'

" 'Certainly.'

"I rang for Rose, who appeared at once. Hardly had she crossed the threshold when the commissary gave a signal and two men whom I had not seen, hidden behind a door, leaped upon her, seized her hands and tied them with cords.

"I screamed furiously and would have rushed forward to defend her had not the commissary restrained me.

" 'This *girl*, Madame, is a man called Jean-Nicholas Lecapet, condemned to death in 1879 for murder preceded by violation. His sentence was commuted to life im-

prisonment. He escaped four months ago, and we have been hunting him ever since.'

"I was frantic and confounded, but I did not believe. The commissary went on, laughing:

"'I can give you only one proof . . . his right arm is tattooed.'

"The sleeve was pulled up, and it was true. The policeman added with a certain bad taste: 'Trust to us for the other evidences!'

"And they led away my *fille de chambre!*

"Well, would you believe, what dominated in me at the moment was not anger at having been tricked, deceived and made ridiculous; was not shame at having been dressed, undressed, handled and touched by this man . . . but a . . . profound humiliation . . . a humiliation as a woman, you understand?"

"No, not very well."

"Come now. Consider. He had been condemned for violation, this young man. Well! I was thinking . . . of her whom he violated . . . and that . . . humiliated me. . . . Do you understand now?"

Madame Margot did not reply. She was looking straight before her, with an eye fixed and singular, at the two shining buttons of the coachman's livery; and her features wore that sphinxlike smile which women have sometimes.

THE PRISONER OF MONACO

I SHOULD like to have the leisure to speak at length of this surprising little State, smaller than a French village, where we find an absolute sovereign, some bishops, an army of Jesuits and seminarians more numerous than that of the Prince, an artillery, the cannons of which are almost useless; an etiquette more ceremonious than that of the late Louis XIV; principles of authority more despotic than those of William of Prussia, joined to a magnificent tolerance of the vices of humanity, by which live the Sovereign, the bishops, the Jesuits, the seminarians, the ministers, the army, the magistracy,—all the world!

Let us salute this good, pacific King, who without fear of invasion and revolution, reigns in peace over his happy little people in the midst of the ceremonies of a court which still preserves the tradition of the four reverences, of the twenty-six curtsies, and of all the formulas once used about the Great Rulers. Notwithstanding, this Monarch is neither sanguinary nor vindictive, and when he banishes—for he does banish—the measure is applied with infinite alleviations.

Do you ask a proof of this? . . .

An obstinate gambler, having had a day of ill luck, insulted the Sovereign. He was expelled by decree. Dur-

ing a month he wandered around the forbidden paradise, fearing the sword of the archangel in the form of a gendarme's sabre. One day, finally, he mustered up his courage, crossed the frontier, gained in thirty seconds the heart of the country, and made his way into the Casino. But suddenly a functionary halts him: "Are you not banished, Monsieur?"

"Yes, Monsieur, but I shall start again by the first train."

"Oh! in that case, very well, Monsieur,—you may enter."

And each week he returns; and each week the same functionary puts the same question to him, to which he makes the same answer.

Could justice be more kind?

But not long ago a case very grave and entirely unprecedented arose in the little kingdom. An assassination took place. A man, a Monacan,—not one of those wandering strangers whom you meet by thousands on these coasts,—a husband, in a moment of rage, killed his wife. Oh, he killed her without reason, without acceptable pretext. Horror was universal throughout the principality. The Supreme Court sat in order to judge this exceptional case (never before had an assassination occurred), and the wretch was condemned to death with unanimity. The indignant Sovereign ratified the sentence. It remained only to execute the malefactor.

Then a difficulty arose—the country possessed neither executioner nor guillotine. What was to be done? Upon the advice of the minister of foreign affairs, the Prince opened negotiations with the French Government in order

to obtain the loan of an executioner with his apparatus. Long deliberations ensued in the ministry at Paris. An answer came at last in the shape of a bill of costs for the use of the machine and the operator. The total rose to sixteen thousand francs.

His Monacan majesty thought the operation would cost him pretty dear; the assassin was surely not worth this price. Sixteen thousand francs for the neck of a fool? His majesty guessed not! The same demand was then addressed to the Italian Government. A king, a brother, would, no doubt, show himself less exacting than a republic. The Italian Government sent a statement of costs which amounted to twelve thousand francs. Twelve thousand francs! Why, a new impost would have to be laid, an impost of two francs per capita! That would suffice to bring unknown troubles upon the State!

They thought to have the scoundrel beheaded by a common soldier, but the general, on being consulted, replied, with some hesitation, that his men had not perhaps sufficient practice with the sword in order to perform a task demanding so much skill and experience. Then the Prince again convoked the Supreme Court and submitted to it this embarrassing case.

The Court deliberated a long time without discovering any practical means. Finally the president proposed to commute the punishment of death to imprisonment for life, and the measure was adopted. But there was no prison! The government was obliged to build one, and a jailer was appointed to take charge of the prisoner. During six months all went well. The captive slept all day on a straw cot in his dungeon, and the jailer did the

same, seated in a chair before the door, when he was not watching the passers-by.

But the Prince is economical,—that is his little defect —and he demands an accounting of the smallest expenses in the State—it is not a long list. They gave him the bill of costs relative to the creation of this new function, to the support of the prison, the prisoner and the jailer. The salary of this last weighed heavily upon the Sovereign's budget. He made a grimace, but when he reflected that this thing might last always—the condemned man was young—he notified his minister of justice to take measures to suppress the expense.

The minister consulted the president of the Supreme Court, and both agreed that they would suppress the charge of the jailer. The prisoner, invited to guard himself, alone, would not fail to escape; and this would solve the question to the satisfaction of everybody. The jailer was then sent home to his family, and a kitchen helper from the palace was charged simply to carry morning and evening the criminal's food. But the fellow made no attempt to regain his liberty.

Now, one day, as they had neglected to send his rations, they saw him coming peaceably to claim them, and from that time he took the habit, in order to spare the kitchen helper the trouble of bringing his meals, of going himself at the regular hours to the palace and eating with the servants, with whom he became very friendly. After breakfast he went for a constitutional, as far as Monte Carlo. Sometimes he entered the Casino to risk five francs on the green cloth. When he was in luck, he treated himself to a good dinner at a hotel of reputation;

then he returned to his prison and closed the door carefully from the inside.

He never slept out a single night.

The situation was becoming difficult, not for the condemned man, but for the judges. The Court met again and it was decided to ask the criminal to leave the State of Monaco. When the decree was made known to him, he said simply: "You are very kind, but what is to become of me? I have no means of earning a living. I have no family. What do you expect me to do? I was condemned to death. You did not execute me. I said nothing. I was then sentenced to prison for life and delivered into the hands of a jailer. You took away my keeper. I said nothing even then.

"Now you wish to banish me from the country. Ah, but I guess not! I am a prisoner, your prisoner, judged and condemned by you. I am faithfully paying the penalty. I stay here!"

The Supreme Court was grounded. The Prince fell into a terrible rage, and ordered that decisive measures be taken. The Court resumed its deliberations.

Then it was decided to offer the criminal a pension of six hundred francs, to go and live in some foreign land. He accepted the proposition.

He rented a patch of ground at the distance of a five-minutes' walk from the State of his former Sovereign. and he lives. happy, upon his land, cultivating a few vegetables and despising all potentates. You may see in the judicial archives of the principality the decree fixing the pension of this fellow, on condition that he leave the Monacan territory.

A LEGEND OF MOUNT ST. MICHAEL

I HAD first seen, from Cancale, that fairy château planted in the sea. I had seen it confusedly, a gray shadow risen against the misty sky. Again I saw it from Avranches in the sunset. The wide sands were red, the horizon was red, all the immense bay was red: alone, the steep abbey towering down there far from the land, like a fantastic manor-house, amazing as a dream palace, incredibly strange and beautiful, stood out almost black in the purple of the dying day.

I went toward it at dawn across the sands, my eyes fixed upon that monstrous jewel, huge as a mountain, carved like a cameo, and vaporous as a lace. The nearer I approached it the more I felt myself transported with admiration, for nothing in the world perhaps is more astonishing and more perfect.

Surprised, as if I had discovered the habitation of a God, I wandered through those halls supported by columns light or heavy, through corridors open to the day, raising my astonished eyes to those spires which seem as it were rockets started toward heaven—to all that amazing confusion of towers, gargoyles, ornaments graceful and charming, fireworks of stone, lace of granite,—a masterpiece of architecture at once delicate and colossal.

As I stood in ecstasy a Low-Norman peasant ap-

proached me and related for my edification the story of the great quarrel between St. Michael and the Devil.

A skeptic of genius has said: "God made man in His own image, but man has fully returned the compliment."

This is an eternal truth, and it would be very curious to make in each country the history of the local divinity, as well as the history of patron saints in each of our provinces. The negro has ferocious idols, devourers of men; the polygamous Mohammedan peoples his paradise with women; the Greeks, like a practical people, have deified all the passions.

Every village in France is placed under the tutelage of a patron saint, modified according to the character of the inhabitants.

Saint Michael watches over Low Normandy,—Saint Michael, the radiant and victorious Archangel, the sword-bearer, the triumphant hero of Heaven, the conqueror of Satan.

Let us see how the Low-Norman, crafty, cautious, sly and tricky, conceives and relates the battle of the great Saint with the Devil.

St. Michael, in order to protect himself against the evil designs of the Wicked One, built for himself, right in the ocean, this habitation fit for an Archangel; and indeed only so great a saint was able to make himself such a residence. But, as he still feared the approaches of the Devil, he surrounded his domain with shifty sands more treacherous than the sea.

The Devil lived in a humble straw-thatched cottage on the coast; but he possessed the prairies bathed with salt

water, the lovely fat lands that bear heavy harvests, the rich valleys and the fertile hills of all the country; while the Saint reigned only over the sands. So that Satan was rich, and St. Michael as poor as a church rat.

After some lean years, the Saint became weary of this state of affairs and he thought to make a compromise with the Devil; but the thing was not too easy, Satan holding to his harvests.

He reflected during six months; then, one morning, he traveled toward the land. The Devil was eating his soup before the door when he perceived the Saint. Instantly he hastened to meet him, kissed the hem of his sleeve, made him come in and offered him some refreshment.

After having drunk a bowl of milk, St. Michael opened the business.

"I have come to make you a good offer."

The Devil, candid and without mistrust, answered, "Nothing would please me better."

"Here it is. You shall lease me all your lands."

Satan, disturbed, wished to speak: "But——"

The Saint interrupted: "Hear me first. You shall lease me all your lands. I shall charge myself with the maintenance, the work, the tillage, the planting, the fertilizing, in short, everything, and we shall share the harvest equally. Is it a bargain?"

The Devil, naturally lazy, accepted. He demanded only, to boot, some of those delicious grey mullet which abound near the solitary Mount. St. Michael promised the fish.

They shook hands on it and spat on the side in order to indicate that the bargain was closed. Then the Saint

dded: "A moment. I don't wish that you should have e least complaint to make of me. Choose which you refer—the part of the harvest which shall be *on the rth,* or that which shall remain *in the earth.*"

Satan said: "I take that which shall be on the earth."

"It is settled," said the Saint. And he went away.

Now, six months after, in the Devil's immense domain, e saw only carrots, turnips, onions, salsifi, all the plants hose fat roots are good and savorous and whose useless af serves at best to feed the cattle.

Satan had nothing and wished to break the contract, eclaring that St. Michael had cheated him. But the aint had acquired a taste for farming; he returned pres-tly to see the Devil.

"I assure you that I had no idea that it would turn out); it just happened like that and through no malice of ine. Now, in order to square things, I offer you this ear all that shall be *under the earth.*"

"That suits me perfectly," said Satan.

Now the next Spring the whole extent of the Devil's nd was covered with fat wheat, with oats as large as our thumb, with flax, with magnificent colza, with red over, with peas, cabbage, artichoke—in a word, with all at flourishes in the sun, either grains or fruits.

Satan had nothing again, and this time he gave full ent to his wrath. He reclaimed his land and his tillage nd remained deaf to all the new overtures of his neigh-or.

A whole year passed away. St. Michael, from the p of his isolated castle, gazed upon the distant and rtile lands, and saw the Devil directing the works, bring-

ng in the harvests, threshing his grains. And he saw all his, raging, exasperated at his own impotence. Not being able to dupe Satan further, he resolved to take vengeance on him; and he went to invite him to dinner for the following Sunday.

"You've not been lucky in your affairs with me," he said. "I know it, but I don't want any hard feelings to stand between us, and I request that you will come and dine with me. I will not send you away fasting."

Satan, as great a glutton as an idler, accepted at once. On the day appointed he put on his best clothes and took the road to the Mount.

St. Michael made him sit down to a magnificent table. First was served a *vol-au-vent* full of cock's combs and crests; then sausages, then two large grey mullet in cream, then a white turkey-hen, stuffed with chestnuts preserved in wine; then a leg of choice lamb, tender as a cake; then some vegetables which melted in the mouth, and some piping hot biscuits which exhaled a perfume of butter.

They drank pure cider, foaming and sweet, also wine red and intoxicating; and after each dish they "made a hole" with some old apple brandy.

The Devil ate and drank like ten men, so that presently he was obliged, without ceremony, to relieve himself.

Then St. Michael, rising formidable, cried in a voice of thunder: "Scoundrel! You dare—before me——!"

Satan, desperate, took to flight, and the Saint, seizing a stick, pursued him.

They ran through the lower halls, bolting around pillars helter-skelter, they mounted the airy staircases, they

galloped along cornices, they leaped from gargoyle to gargoyle. The poor Devil, sick as a dog, fled, soiling as he went the grand habitation of the Saint. At length he found himself on the last terrace, very high up, whence you can see the immense bay with its distant cities, its coasts and pasture lands. He could no longer escape, and the Saint, giving him a furious kick in the behind, launched him like a ball through space.

Down the sky he fell like a javelin and landed heavily before the city of Mortain. The horns of his forehead and the claws of his hands and feet sank deep into the rock, which keeps for eternity the traces of this fall of Satan.

He rose limping, crippled until the end of time; and regarding far off the fatal Mount erected like a peak in the setting sun, he understood that he would always be conquered in this unequal struggle. Then he started, dragging one leg after him, directing his course toward distant countries; abandoning to his Enemy his fields, his hills, his valleys and his meadows.

Behold how St. Michael, patron of Normans, conquered the Devil!

Another people would have imagined a different version of this duel.

HAPPINESS

It was the hour for tea, before the lamps were lighted. The villa overlooked the sea; the sun having set, had left the sky all red from its passage, sparkling here and there as with gold-dust, and the Mediterranean, without a wrinkle, without a surge, smooth, shining still in the fading light, seemed like a polished and unbounded mirror. In the distance, on the right, the serrated mountains threw their black profile upon the pale purple of the sunset.

The company were talking of love; they were discussing this old subject; they were saying over again what they had already said very often. The tender melancholy of the twilight softened their speech, awakening an emotion in their souls; and this word "love" which recurred constantly, now uttered by a man's strong voice, now spoken in the lighter tone of a woman, seemed to fill the drawing-room, to fly there like a bird, to hover there like a spirit.

Can one love during many succeeding years?

Yes, affirmed some. No, asserted others.

And they began to distinguish cases, to mark exceptions, to cite examples. All of them, men and women, full of insurgent, troubling memories, of which they could not speak and which rose unbidden to their lips, were deeply

moved whilst they talked of this thing so common yet so supreme, the tender and mysterious accord of two beings, with a profound emotion and an ardent interest.

Suddenly some one, with eyes fixed on the distance, cried out:

"Oh! look down there:—what is that?"

On the sea, at the verge of the horizon, a gray mass was rising; enormous and confused in outline.

The women left their seats and came forward to behold this surprising thing, which they had never seen before.

Somebody said: "It is Corsica! You can see it thus two or three times a year under certain atmospheric conditions, when the air, of a perfect limpidity, does not hide it with those vapory mists which always veil the distance."

They distinguished vaguely the hills, they thought they could pick out the snowy summits. And all were surprised, troubled, almost frightened by this startling apparition of a world, this phantom risen from the sea.

Perhaps *they* also had seen these strange visions—they who voyaged, like Columbus, across oceans unexplored.

Then an old gentleman, who had not yet spoken, said: "Listen, my friends, I found in this island which rises before us, as if to answer itself to what we were saying and to recall to me a strange memory,—I found there an admirable example of a constant love, incredibly happy. Here is the story:

"Five years ago I made a voyage to Corsica. This

barbarous island is more unknown to us and more remote than America, although one may sometimes see it from the coast of France, as to-day.

"Imagine a world still in chaos, a tempest of mountains separated by narrow ravines through which the torrents roll; not a plain, but immense waves of granite, of earth covered with thickets or dense forests of chestnut and pine. It is a virgin soil, uncultivated, deserted, although sometimes one perceives a village like a heap of rocks on top of a mountain. No tillage, no industry, no art. One never comes upon a piece of fashioned wood, a bit of sculptured stone; never a hint of taste, crude or refined, on the part of ancestors for things gracious and beautiful. That it is which strikes one most in this hard, superb country—the hereditary indifference toward that quest of beautiful things which we call Art.

"Italy, where each palace filled with masterpieces is itself a masterpiece, where the marble, the wood, the bronze, the iron, the metals and the stones attest the genius of men, where the smallest ancient things remaining in old houses reveal this divine care for beauty,—Italy is for us all a sacred fatherland which we love because it shows us and proves to us the effort, the grandeur, the power, and the triumph of creative intelligence.

"And yet, directly facing it, Corsica has remained as barbarous as in her first days. Man lives there in his sordid cabin, indifferent to all that does not touch his existence itself or his family quarrels. He has remained with the qualities and the defects of uncultured races: violent, malignant, unconsciously bloody-minded, but also hospitable, generous, devoted, simple; opening his door

to the wayfarer and giving his faithful friendship for the least mark of sympathy.

"Well, during a month I wandered through this magnificent isle with the feeling that I was at the end of the world. No inns, no taverns, no roads. By mule-paths you climb to hamlets fastened to the side of mountains, which overhang the tortuous abysses whence arises at night to your ear the hollow, profound voice of the torrent. You knock at a house door, you ask a night's lodging and enough food until the morrow. You sit down at the humble table and you sleep under the humble roof; and in the morning you shake hands with your host, who conducts you to the outskirts of the village.

"One evening after a ten-hours' march, I reached a little house standing alone at the bottom of a narrow valley which a league farther on ended in the sea. The two steep sides of the mountain, covered with brushwood, with heaped-up rocks and trees, shut in like two somber walls this sad and gloomy ravine.

"Around this cottage some vines, a little garden, and farther off, some great chestnut trees,—in a word, enough to live on, a fortune for that poor country.

"The woman who received me was old, severe looking, and exceptionally neat. The man, seated on a straw chair, rose to salute me, then sat down again without speaking a word. His companion said: 'Excuse him; he is deaf now. He is eighty-two years old.'

"She spoke pure French; I was surprised.

"I asked her: 'You are not of Corsica?'

"She replied, 'No, we are continentals. But we have lived here fifty years.'

"A sensation of anguish and fear seized me at the thought of those fifty years far from the joyous cities where men live. At this moment an old shepherd entered, and we sat down to the single dish of which the meal consisted,—a thick soup, a stew of potatoes, bacon and cabbage.

"When the short meal was finished I went to sit outside the door, my heart oppressed by the melancholy of the sad landscape, by that distress which sometimes weighs upon travelers on certain sad evenings, in certain desolate places. It seems at such times that all is about to end, life itself and the universe. One suddenly perceives, as never before, the frightful misery of life, the isolation of all beings, the nothingness of everything, and the black solitude of the heart which lulls and deceives itself with dreams, even unto death.

"The old woman joined me and, tortured by that curiosity which lives always at the bottom of the most resigned souls, she asked: 'Then you come from France?'

" 'Yes, I am traveling for pleasure.'

" 'You are from Paris, perhaps?'

" 'No, I am from Nancy.'

"It seemed to me that a deep emotion seized her at these words. How I saw or felt that I cannot tell. She repeated in a hesitant voice:

" 'You are from Nancy!'

"The man appeared in the doorway; impassive as the deaf always are. She said: 'Don't mind him: he hears nothing.'

"Then, after waiting a few seconds:

" 'So you know people at Nancy?'

" 'Yes, almost everybody there.'

" 'The Sainte-Allaize family?'

" 'Yes, very well; they were friends of my father.'

" 'May I ask your name?'

"I told it. She looked fixedly at me; then said in that low voice which memories awaken:

" 'Oh, yes, I recall it well. And the Brisemares, what is become of them?'

" 'All dead.'

" 'Ah! and the Sirmonts, did you know them?'

" 'Yes, the last is now a general.'

"Then she said, trembling with emotion, with anguish, with I know not what confused sentiment, sacred and powerful, with I know not what need of confessing, of telling all, of speaking about those things which until then she had held shut up at the bottom of her heart, and of those people whose name overwhelmed her soul:

" 'Yes, Henri de Sirmont, I know him well, indeed—he is my brother!'

"I looked at her, almost frightened with surprise. And all at once I remembered.

"There had been long ago a great scandal in proud Lorraine. A young girl, rich and beautiful, Suzanne de Sirmont, had been carried off by a sub-officer of a regiment of hussars which her father commanded. He was a handsome fellow, the son of peasants, wearing gracefully the blue hussar's jacket, this soldier who had taken the fancy of his colonel's daughter. She had seen him, remarked him, and loved him no doubt whilst watching the squadrons on parade. But how had she spoken to him, how had they managed to see and understand each other?

How had she dared to let him know that she loved him? All that was never known. Nobody had divined or suspected anything. One night, when the soldier was off duty, he disappeared with her. A search was made; they were not found. Nothing was ever heard of them and they were believed to be dead.

"And I had re-discovered her in this gloomy valley! . . .

"Then, in my turn, I spoke: 'Yes, I remember perfectly; you are Mademoiselle Suzanne.'

"She nodded 'Yes,' with tears falling from her eyes. Then glancing toward the old man, motionless on the door-sill, she said: 'It is he!'

"And I understood that she loved him always, that always she saw him with her fascinated eyes.

"I asked: 'Have you been happy, at least?'

"She replied in a voice that came from the heart: 'Oh, yes! very happy. He has made me very happy. I have never regretted anything.'

"Sad, surprised, astounded by the power of love, I gazed upon her. This rich girl had followed this poor man, this peasant. She had given herself to his life without charm, without luxury, without refinement or delicacy of any sort; she had adapted herself to his simple habits. And she loved him still. She had become a rustic hind's wife, in straw bonnet and coarse petticoat. Seated on a straw chair, she ate from an earthen dish on a rough, wooden table, a stew of potatoes, cabbage and bacon. She lay on a straw pallet at his side.

"She had never thought of anything but him! She had not regretted either diamonds or necklaces, either rich

dresses or luxuries, either the softness of upholstered divans or the perfumed warmth of chambers hung with tapestries, or the comfort and repose of downy beds. She had never needed anyone or anything but him; provided that he was there, she desired nothing.

"She had abandoned life, very young, and the world, and those who had brought her up and loved her. She had come, alone with him, to this wild ravine. And he had been all for her,—all that one desires, all that one dreams of, all that one constantly expects, all that one hopes for without end. He had filled her life with happiness from one end to the other. She could not have been more happy.

"And all the night through, whilst hearing the raucous breathing of the old soldier stretched on his pallet beside her who had followed him so far, I kept thinking of this strange and simple romance, of this happiness so complete, yet made up of so little. At daybreak I shook hands with the old couple and went my way."

The speaker ended. A woman remarked: "All the same, her ideal was too facile, her needs too primitive and her requirements too simple. She must have been a fool."

Another said dreamily, "Ah! what does it matter?—she was happy!" . . .

And down there, at the verge of the horizon, Corsica was sinking in the night, slowly returning into the sea, effacing her immense shadow which had appeared as if she would herself relate the story of the two humble lovers sheltered by her shore.

THE END

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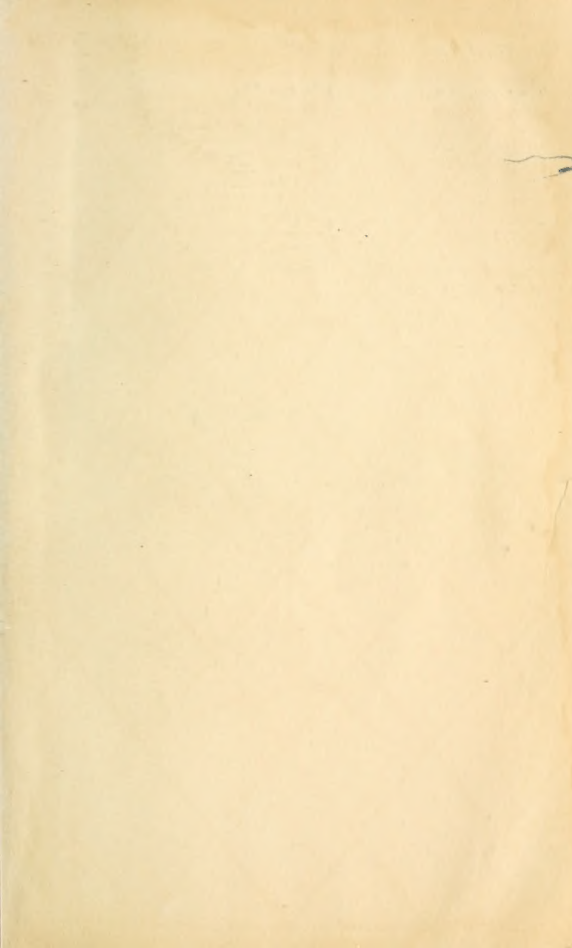

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